

ARE BORDERS UN-CHRISTIAN? ■ RUDY & ROMNEY POSE AS MINUTEMEN

SEPTEMBER 24, 2007

The American Conservative

How do we leave Iraq?



By land.

Leaders Wanted

Since the invasion of Iraq, the question of whether Washington would extend the war to Iran has been on the table. Ariel Sharon demanded that Bush go after

Iran “the day after” Iraq was conquered, and the neoconservatives in and outside the administration have always made clear that Baghdad was only an appetizer. They wanted “regime change”—that bloodless, almost pacific euphemism—throughout the Middle East, but nowhere more than Tehran.

For four years now, a shadow play has been acted between the administration’s hawks and the remaining realists in the upper reaches of the military and foreign-affairs bureaucracy. Seymour Hersh’s well-sourced articles in *The New Yorker*, parsing various administration plans for attacking Iran, have been required reading in the capital.

The informed consensus was that the War Party was still around, though weakened by the Iraq debacle. Donald Rumsfeld was gone from the Pentagon, replaced by a man who rather logically suggested that Iran might want nuclear weapons because it is surrounded by four nuclear powers, has seen two of its neighbors invaded by the United States, and seeks the means of deterrence. Some in Washington might have remembered that Iran was the one place in the entire Muslim world where thousands turned out spontaneously for a candlelight vigil expressing sorrow and solidarity with the American people after 9/11.

What one heard most frequently from those in positions to make informed guesses was the administration couldn’t possibly do something so stupid. Iraq had injected some realism into the decision-making process. The consequences of an attack on Iran would be abysmal, and that was widely understood.

This was an optimistic reading: its plotline was that the Iraq War would be seen as a terrible but isolated strategic mistake, with consequences that the United States could eventually recover from, as it did from Vietnam. America’s vast recuperative powers would reassert themselves, infusing the country with a bit more modesty, more “decent respect for the opinions of mankind.”

But in the last few weeks, this calculus has shifted. War with Iran now seems more likely than not, perhaps nearly inevitable. Last May, the House, though controlled by Democrats who owed their majority to antiwar sentiment and opposition to Bush’s foreign policy, abrogated their constitutional obligation by rejecting an amendment that would have required the president to seek Congress’s approval for an attack on Iran. AIPAC had lobbied against the measure, and the House fell into line.

During the summer, the administration ratcheted up the rhetoric against Iran. The flashpoint was no longer the Iranian nuclear “threat,” which experts continued to maintain was a decade or more away. Now it was Iranian activities in Iraq, as if Tehran was to blame for our difficulties of conquest. In August, the president further raised the temperature, declaring the Iranian Revolutionary Guard a terrorist group.

As detailed by Justin Logan in this issue, the neoconservative agitprop organs are systematically gearing up to prepare the American people for a wider war. NYU Afghanistan expert Barnett Rubin reported hearing from a source at

a neoconservative think tank of these plans. Rubin’s source added, “I am a Republican. I am a conservative. But I’m not a raging lunatic. This is lunatic.”

The likely war scenario, according to those who have analyzed Washington’s capabilities, is large-scale bombing, a week or more of air strikes. The idea is not to invade—there are no troops—or to take out Iranian nuclear facilities—probably an impossibility—but to destroy the country’s infrastructure and damage its military in the hope that the government will collapse amid the chaos. The American Enterprise Institute has already devoted a program to exploring the idea of a “federal Iran”—that is, an Iran broken up into ethnic regions to ensure that it is finished as a regional power.

CIA observers see this scenario as a nightmare. One analyst, quoted by Hersh, compares it to a perfect storm: “we’ll have Syrians, Iranians, Hamas and Hezbollah fighting against us, and Saudis and Egyptians questioning their ties to the West . . . [F]or the first time since the caliphate, there will be common cause in the Middle East.”

This new war is not unstoppable. Those who could do the most to stem the rush are in the House and especially the Senate. There are a dozen senators—Webb, Hagel, and Dodd come to mind—who could generate enough national attention and jumpstart a debate if they spoke out forcefully against the looming danger. Were it argued, the idea that America could improve its long-term position in the Mideast and the world by destroying yet another country would be laughed out of court.

On the other hand, the warmongers’ best ally is a compliant Congress. Thus far, they have every reason to be quite satisfied. ■

REUTERS PHOTO ARCHIVE



[COVER]

Easy Out

BY GREGORY COCHRAN Don't overestimate the logistical impediments to a quick withdrawal. **Page 6**

A Separate Peace

BY LEON HADAR Iraq will move forward when America leaves it behind. **Page 8**

[STRATEGY]

Open Fire

BY PAUL W. SCHROEDER Americans still don't understand that the Iraq War didn't go wrong. The war was wrong. **Page 10**

[IDEAS]

After Tocqueville

BY CHILTON WILLIAMSON JR. Can democracy expand across the globe when it's dying at its source? **Page 23**

COVER ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS HIERS

COLUMNS

15 James G. Poulos: The Party's Over

27 Daniel Larison: The Good News About Borders

35 Taki: Putin's Progress

NEWS & VIEWS

2 Editorial: Silence in the Senate

4 Fourteen Days: We're All Neorealists Now; Gambling with History; Mr. Allawi Goes to Washington

9 Deep Background: Gates Against the War Party; CIA Exonerates Itself

ARTICLES

16 W. James Antle III: Rudy and Romney pose as Minutemen.

18 Michael Brendan Dougherty: Giuliani wins, social conservatives lose?

20 Justin Logan: Will the neocons' Iranian PR campaign bomb?

ARTS & LETTERS

28 Steve Sailer: Paul Haggis's "In the Valley of Elah"

29 Gary Brecher: *Cheney: The Untold Story of America's Most Powerful and Controversial Vice President* by Stephen F. Hayes

31 Scott McConnell: *World War IV: The Long Struggle Against Islamofascism* by Norman Podhoretz

33 Richard B. Spencer: *Until Proven Innocent: Political Correctness and the Shameful Injustices of the Duke Lacrosse Case* by Stuart Taylor Jr. and K.C. Johnson

[IDEOLOGY]

BY ANY OTHER NAME

In addition to Norman Podhoretz (whose book is reviewed in this issue), Rudy Giuliani has chosen Israeli-American professor Martin Kramer to give him Mideast policy advice. Some press notice has been given to the fact that Kramer doesn't believe that Arabs are eager for democracy, or at least doesn't buy into the Bush concept of democracy promotion as the lodestar of American policy in the region. But rest easy neocons, Kramer believes we should invade their countries anyway—just without the democratist rhetoric.

This point of view has a new label, which Kramer seems happy to adopt: neorealism! As foreign-policy realists were almost unanimously skeptical that any good would come of an American invasion of Iraq—many among them warned presciently and eloquently against it—Kramer is actually engaging in a bit of name-snatching: "I'm not a neoconservative," he can say. "I'm a neorealist."

Of course there's a good precedent for this sort of thing: after a time, the Hiss's and Rosenbergs and their ideological brethren didn't find it useful to be called "communists" anymore. They adopted a venerable name from the American political tradition, and hesto presto, there were no longer communists, only "progressives." Our neoconservatives are sure to find this classic chameleon maneuver instructive.

[CULTURE]

BATTLE FOR MEMORY

Imagine standing at the battlefield where over 46,000 Americans perished—where Abraham Lincoln delivered one of the most famous speeches in American history—and directly ahead you see a casino overflowing with slot machines.



"I've heard about the presidential primaries being moved up ... so is this the vote for 2008 or 2012?"

BEATTIE: COPLEY NEWS SERVICE

There is a new battle at Gettysburg and other historical sites, this time between preservationists and developers.

Luckily, plans for the Gettysburg casino were halted by the Civil War Preservation Trust. But developers still have their eyes on other famous battlefields. A mining company in Cedar Creek, Virginia is lobbying to have 600 battlefield acres rezoned, and developers in Harper's Ferry surreptitiously dug through historical sites to install sewer and water piping.

That developers want to "monetize" this land is not surprising. The scandal is that so many local governments and preservation societies lack the political will or funds to fight this threat to our common patrimony. Conservatives in particular should embrace the cause of historical preservation. If our civilization is a compact between the living, the dead, and the unborn, we might take a little time from our battles over marginal tax rates to maintain the fields in which our forebears bled and died.

[TRADE]

ROAD TEST

Federal courts recently ruled that the Bush administration can embark on a pilot program to allow Mexican trucks full access to U.S. roads per NAFTA's demands.

Understandably, environmentalists and Big Labor aren't pleased. Teamsters President Jim Hoffa called it "a slap in the face to American workers." Sierra

Club Executive Director Carl Pope said, "Before providing unconditional access throughout the country to tens of thousands of big rigs we know little to nothing about, we must ensure they meet safety and environmental standards."

Giving Mexican transport companies a free pass on America's highways means an unlimited number of truckers who have no HAZMAT training, no mandatory drug or alcohol testing, no background checks, and no annual physicals required to retain their commercial licenses. In the name of free trade, American roads will be less safe, and American truckers will be cut off at the knees.

And if Mexican entrepreneurship lives up to its reputation, this also undoubtedly means the truckers will moonlight as coyotes.

[WORLD]

POVERTY STRATEGY

In America's great crusade on behalf of the oppressed people of the Middle East, the region's most needy are least likely to receive our sympathy. For they aren't caught in a tyrant's grip. They are being strangled by our democratic ally.

A new United Nations report finds that last year the number of Palestinians living in "deep poverty" doubled. Nearly half of public-sector employees—the lucky ones in an economy suffering over 30 percent unemployment—do not have enough to eat.

Some 550 checkpoints enforce the

Israeli embargo, which has “squeezed the economy to a size smaller than a decade ago.” Today, Israel accounts for 92 percent of the value of Palestinian trade; Jordan 2 percent, Egypt less than 1 percent. Moreover, after Hamas took office in March 2006, Israel froze the customs funds it owed to the Palestinian Authority from 2000 to 2005—some \$1.2 billion—even as international aid was severely cut.

Israel claims that this chokehold is the only way to prevent terrorist attacks. It’s also the surest way to ensure that they continue. Israel’s birth rate is 2.8; Gaza’s is 5.8. This rapidly growing captive generation has much to resent—and increasingly little to lose.

[IRAQ]

ALLAWI '08?

The last time we heard from Ayad Allawi, he was Iraq’s interim prime minister. A former Ba’athist and all-around tough guy, *Newsweek* dubbed him “our new s.o.b. in Iraq.” But after Nouri al-Maliki’s 2005 election, Allawi faded into memory.

Now he’s mounting a comeback—not in Baghdad but in Washington. In the past few weeks, he has penned an op-ed for the *Washington Post* on his “plan for Iraq” and has retained the D.C. lobbying firm Barbour Griffin & Rogers, known for its GOP ties. Allawi probably has his eye on the prime minister seat—whether he plans to be elected by Iraqis or installed by Washington isn’t clear. But seeking to win hearts and minds inside the Beltway might be a clue.

George W. Bush has given his support to Maliki as only he can—“he’s a good guy”—but many have called for the PM to be replaced. Most recently, Democrats Hillary Clinton and Sen. Carl Levin have piled on.

Those with long memories may feel they’ve seen this movie before. As President Kennedy was beginning to pour

troops into Vietnam, the divided country’s prime minister Ngo Dinh Diem became a demon figure in Washington—“if only South Vietnam had better leadership, the war would go so much better.”

Kennedy gave the go-ahead to South Vietnamese generals who staged a coup, abducting the Catholic Diem from Mass and shooting him. There followed a new coup and a new Vietnamese “strong man” every couple of months, for years. None of it made any difference of course: installing a Saigon regime that we liked and keeping it in power were mutually exclusive propositions. But tens of thousands of Americans were killed and maimed before we figured that out.

Making Maliki a scapegoat won’t produce any better results than blaming failure on Diem.

[MILITARY]

LYNCHING WARNER

It was troubling to see Sen. John Warner being dressed down by Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, an Iraqi field commander who labeled Warner’s suggestion that we start withdrawing troops by Christmas “a giant step backwards.”

Yale law professor Bruce Ackerman picked up on the discordant note: what business does a general have reprimanding a U.S. senator, in a rather blatant breach of the tradition of civilian control over the military? Of course it’s easy to understand why the White House gave Lynch his attack orders. Who else in the administration has any credibility left?

But it’s sad to see men in uniform being used this way, as the last line of defense of a policy bereft of real political support. The fate of Bush’s surge will be in great part determined by the response to General Petraeus in the weeks to come. Lynch’s dissing of the Senate’s most respected veteran may be the opening scene in an extended civilian-military drama. ■

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Easy Out

Leave the office furniture behind. It isn't worth one soldier's life.

By Gregory Cochran

FINALLY, we're hearing concrete talk about withdrawal from Iraq. Probably this has something to do with public opinion: in a recent Gallup poll, 71 percent supported leaving Iraq in a year or less.

Most public discussions of the actual mechanics of withdrawal have emphasized how difficult it will be. Army sources, many of them, estimate that it will take time. Most reports say 12 to 20 months. They cite endless lists of equipment that must be removed—everything from tanks to silverware. Analysts say that most troops would probably be airlifted, reasoning that flying would be safer than Iraqi highways. Military experts also worry that we will face armed opposition and have to fight our way out.

Of course, military experts have said many things about Iraq over the years—and how often have they proved correct?

The first obvious objection is that it didn't take that long to invade Iraq in the first place. We crossed the border on March 20, 2003, and smashed the Iraqi government and military in about three weeks. Baghdad was formally occupied by April 9. We managed to win easily, facing 13 infantry divisions, 10 mechanized/armored divisions, and miscellaneous paramilitary forces—a more-or-less organized force numbering approximately 400,000 men. We lost only 139 soldiers in the invasion phase, although we've had more than 3,000 killed in the occupation.

Modern armies, including ours, are mobile. So why would it take so much longer to leave? The short answer is that it won't.

The long answer is that talk about an 18-month withdrawal is the product of confused priorities and poor strategic analysis. Let me suggest some principles that should guide our planning. Knowing your goals makes life simpler.

First, we should aim to get our troops out safely, with their weapons intact. Weapons are important—we win more because of superior equipment than superior training or talent. That equipment is expensive, takes a long time to replace with our existing procurement system, and we might actually need it if we found ourselves in a war of necessity.

Second, we should forget about accomplishing anything else. If we couldn't create a compliant Iraq with 150,000 troops, we won't manage it with 50,000 or 20,000. Many of our presidential candidates—you can recognize them by the humps on their backs—are talking about retaining smaller numbers of troops in Iraq, hoping to achieve some political end or at least disguise defeat, but that pig won't fly. Our forces are tremendously powerful (compared to the insurgents) and never lose battles, but leaving small residual forces in a fundamentally hostile country—a solid majority of non-Kurdish Iraqis now find attacks on coalition forces acceptable—is asking for trouble. The British tried that in Basra, and they took rocket and mortar fire every day while achieving nothing.

From this point of view, decisions about moving day become straightforward. For example, what should we do about the vast amount of non-combat

materiel in Iraq? We've accumulated dentist chairs, chapel pews, swimming-pool filtration systems, office complexes, multimillion-dollar fitness centers, air-conditioners, refrigerators, prefab latrines, Coke machines, even 50-inch plasma TVs. We have stockpiles of 50-gallon oil drums full of battery acid, contaminated oil, and industrial solvents. We're being told that it all has to be shipped home. I have a better idea: leave it all behind. I'm sure that the Army bureaucracy thinks that we've got to move these refrigerators, got to move these TV's. They're wrong. Maybe they fear that leaving a single vending machine behind means that they will have to personally answer to the Coca-Cola Company.

The longer we stay, the more men we lose. How can anyone believe that piles of junk are worth anyone's life? We could spend extra time in Iraq in order to ship home toxic waste, but we can do without that kind of cosmic irony. Better to gift-wrap those drums and let the Iraqis steal them. I say it again: bring out men, weapons, ammo, vital spares—leave the pews.

Leaving behind everything but war-fighting equipment makes the move manageable. We've shipped something like 9 million tons of stuff to Iraq, but only a small fraction—less than 10 percent—is war materiel. Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies says that we have somewhere between 140,000 and 200,000 tons of crucial equipment and supplies in Iraq, as well as 15-20,000

vehicles and major weapons. That can't add up to more than half a million tons total. Those vehicles can be driven out. The "crucial equipment" would have to be trucked out, which would take a week or two of normal traffic on the main road to Kuwait. We already make over 1,000 trips a day, and the trucks must be nearly empty when returning.

With this one choice, we've made the move almost 20 times easier. Some may object on the grounds that all those creature comforts and office supplies cost billions of dollars, but even if you put aside for the moment the extra lives lost in a long, drawn-out exit, remember that the occupation is costing us \$10 billion a month. Staying even one extra week to get out the last of the porta-potties is like running into a burning building to save your sea monkeys.

BRING OUT MEN, WEAPONS, AMMO, VITAL SPARES—**LEAVE THE PEWS.**

Sometimes the Army answers a different question than the one the reporters asked. They wanted to know how long it would take to leave Iraq, but they were told how long it would take to get everything back to the States—which is not the same thing at all. Once our forces get into Kuwait, they're safe, even if they're not yet home. Of course, in some cases the professionals are being honest and crazy at the same time. They keep saying that it's going to take amazingly long to get tanks and vehicles home, since they must be cleaned painstakingly in order to meet Agriculture Department regulations. In fact, that need not slow down our exit at all. We can wash them down in Kuwait. More fundamentally, thinking that regulations trump all other considerations in a real, albeit pointless, war is, not to put too fine a point on it, nuts. If we can violate the Geneva Conventions and the UN Charter, we can prob-

ably get away with bending a few bureaucratic rules.

The same analysts, most of them anyway, have expressed concern that we will have to fight our way out of Iraq. I think there's a fair chance that we will face some opposition, although more practical Iraqis will probably be busy looting our camps as we abandon them, just as they have looted the bases abandoned by the British in the south. But we can be sure that the opposition will be insignificant and our casualties few, since the insurgents we face in Iraq would be extremely weak in a conventional fight. Remember that we lost fewer than 150 men during the invasion, when we faced 23 divisions, organized troops armed with (according to U.S. estimates) almost 2,000 main battle tanks, 3,500 armored personnel carriers,

and 2,000 artillery pieces. The insurgents today have no tanks, no APCs, no heavy artillery, and yet we're supposed to worry about the havoc they would wreak during any withdrawal. We've been seeing about 100 men a month killed in action in 2007, we'd lose fewer in a rapid withdrawal than we would by staying one more month. The insurgents excel at planting IEDs and blending into the population—but that's all they're good at. In a conventional battle, they would do about as well as a rabbit in a lawnmower. If you're worried that the Iraqi army we're always training might turn on us, relax: we never gave them any heavy weapons, which shows that someone was thinking ahead.

Since the "fight our way out" risks have been wildly exaggerated, planners should reconsider their notion of withdrawing most troops by air. If the insurgents manage to shoot down even one C-130 full of troops with a surface-to-air

missile, we will lose more men than we would by taking Route Tampa. Moreover, we have to get those tanks and armored vehicles out somehow, and simply driving them to Kuwait with full crews does the job while keeping the withdrawing force strong—much stronger than any potential opposition.

Politicians, for the most part, have accepted statements about withdrawal requiring anywhere from one to two years. They want to be "responsible"—that'll be the day. Some may have calculated that slow withdrawal might better disguise defeat and thus be more politically palatable, but I don't think many are that Machiavellian. I think instead that, with a few honorable exceptions, they're profoundly ignorant of war and thus have to blindly accept anything the professional military says. That ignorance is, of course, one of the reasons we got into this mess in the first place. That goes double for columnists: in pundit-land, a military expert is someone who thinks that the phalanx is cutting-edge technology.

The bottom line is that we can get troops and war-fighting equipment out of Iraq rapidly and relatively safely, certainly in less than six months, probably in three. Neither the Iraqis nor the Department of Agriculture can materially interfere with withdrawal. It would be faster than that, except for complications such as evacuating contractors and completely securing or destroying advanced weaponry that we don't want examined or copied by potential enemies. That, we need to be careful about. Fast withdrawal is safer than slow—it minimizes the slow bleed of occupation, and it avoids leaving dangerously weak forces in-country for long periods. Once we make up our mind to leave, "then 'twere well 'twere done quickly." ■

Gregory Cochran is a physicist and evolutionary biologist.

A Separate Peace

Leaving the country to save it

By Leon Hadar

CASABLANCA, SEPT. 17, 2010—The international conference that opened in this beautiful city yesterday is expected to put some final touches on a United Nations-sponsored accord on the future of the new state being set up in Mesopotamia, the Confederation of Iraq and Kurdistan (CFIK). The agreement was reached in early July, following months of negotiations in Bern, Switzerland, where the Arab League, Iran, and Turkey, together with representatives of the main ethnic and religious groups in Iraq that have been fighting over control of the country, accepted the formula proposed by the two lead mediators, U.S. Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke and French Foreign Secretary Bernard Kouchner.

The agreement calls for the division of the former Iraq into two political entities—the Islamic Republic of Iraq (IRI) and the Kurdish Republic (KR)—that are delineated by the Inter-Entity Boundary Line and together form the decentralized CFIK. The accord also stipulated that the CFIK “belongs” to eight constitutive ethnic groups—Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Turkmen, Armenians, Persians, Shabaks, and Lurs—and provides for the protection of these groups through regional and international guarantees and the presence of international peacekeeping troops from NATO and the Arab League.

The accord also safeguards the rights of religious groups including Shi’ites, Sunnis, Christians, Jews, Bahá’ís, Mandaeans, and Yezidis. The Sunnis residing in the IRI will be granted limited political autonomy in the provinces where they constitute a majority, mostly in provincial towns and rural villages in the Sunni Tri-

angle. Local forces, augmented by police and military units from the Arab League and Pakistan, will help maintain security. Baghdad will be declared an “open city” for five years, with UN peacekeeping troops securing law and order. Eventually, the city will be reinstituted as the capital of the CFIK.

“The agreement reached in Bern is testimony to the willingness of all Iraqis, Arabs and Kurds, as well their neighbors in the region, to overcome deep-rooted differences,” Secretary Holbrooke said during a speech here three days ago. After expressing his gratitude to President Hillary Clinton—“at the other Casa Blanca” (“Casa Blanca,” of course, is “White House” in Spanish)—and to French President Nicolas Sarkozy for their contribution to the success of the conference, the U.S. chief diplomat turned to his French counterpart and, to the laughter of the audience, delivered the famous line: “Bernard, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.”

No one is expecting a “beautiful friendship” to dawn any time soon over Mesopotamia, where a civil war raged for nearly five years following the bombing of the Al-Askari Mosque in February 2006. More than 1.5 million Iraqis lost their lives, along with some 100,000 foreigners. The fighting also turned about 10 percent of Iraq’s 27 million citizens into refugees, as they fled ethnic cleansing operations by both Sunni and Shi’ite guerrillas.

Iraq now resembles Bosnia and parts of the former Yugoslavia at the height of the fighting in the 1990s, when each community fled to places where its members were a majority

and could defend themselves.

But notwithstanding the tragic loss of life and the destruction that has taken place in Iraq, the dire predictions by former President Bush and his top aides—that the consequences of withdrawal would be cataclysmic—were not realized after the administration started to withdraw American forces in early 2008. Bush was forced to make that decision in November 2007, after most of the Democrats and close to half of the Republicans in Congress adopted a plan that called for drawing troops down to 80,000 by the following November and dispensing with most of the rest by the end of 2009.

In fact, as experts point out, the peak of the civil war in Iraq occurred before the start of the U.S. withdrawal around December 2007, when more than 2 million Iraqis had already left their homes and close to a million had been killed in the fighting. The U.S. pullout, which made it less likely that the Shi’ites could count on the Americans as their protectors of last resort, helped produce a military stalemate between Sunni and Shi’ite forces. The Iraqi security forces, which are mostly Shi’ite, could not fight to maintain control of Sunni areas, and Sunni insurgent groups quickly took over the Sunni areas. At the same time, the Shi’ite-dominated Iraqi security forces deployed to Sunni areas fled and returned to their families in Baghdad and in southern Iraq. In the aftermath of the Shi’ite pullout from Sunni areas of Iraq, the Sunni insurgent forces were not large enough to enter Shi’ite-dominated areas of Iraq or to try to win control of the central government.

Moreover, the rapid achievement of battlefield equilibrium made it less likely that either the regional protectors of the Sunnis (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan) or of the Shi'ites (Iran) would become directly involved in internal Iraqi conflict. If anything, the American withdrawal produced incentives for the Saudis, Iranians, and the Turks to convene a Persian Gulf Security Forum (PGSF) to help co-ordinate their response to the situation in Iraq.

The only outside military intervention occurred in June 2008, when the Kurdish military took over Mosul and declared independence, and Turkish troops, after receiving a green light from the PGSF, occupied the Kurdish region. The Turks agreed to withdraw only after the Kurds, during negotiations under American auspices, reversed their decision to declare independence and promised to guarantee the rights of the Turkmen community in exchange for greater political autonomy in a future Iraqi confederation. At the same time, the Sunnis' decision to accept limited political autonomy and not to form their own republic reflected their recognition that they lacked control of any sources of oil revenue.

Progress will be slow, but extending the American occupation would have only drawn out the civil war and prevented Iran from co-operating with Saudi Arabia and Turkey to bring stability. The agreement reached in Bern helped to formalize the equilibrium among Iraq's communities and accelerate the evolution of Iraq into three separate, self-governing regions.

Asked to comment on these developments, former Vice President Dick Cheney told CNN's Wolf Blitzer: "I don't like to brag, but I predicted five years ago that the insurgency in Iraq was in the last throes." ■

Leon Hadar is a Cato Institute research fellow in foreign-policy studies.

Iran has moved to the forefront of U.S. policy attention and will remain there through the end of the Bush administration.

President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have adopted a recommendation from former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger that in effect abandons the "freedom agenda" for Iraq and the Arab Middle East in favor of focusing on Iran as a strategic menace to the entire region. In practical terms, this means that the U.S. will ultimately, during Bush's remaining months as president, seek to resolve the Iranian nuclear challenge using whatever means are necessary. Kissinger has warned Bush that bringing democratic institutions to Arabs is a work of generations and cannot be accomplished in the near future. Better to deal with Iran as a strategic threat to the Middle East and especially Arab dictatorships such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt that are essential U.S. allies in the region.

Vice President Cheney has successfully argued for retaliatory measures against Iran when an Iranian "smoking gun" can be identified, and the White House has authorized more aggressive steps to capture Iranians who are found inside Iraq, including so-called religious tourists visiting Shi'ite shrines who might be plausibly linked to Tehran. A major incident would permit the initiation of a series of attacks against Iranian military facilities that Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has warned would quickly escalate as the Iranians retaliate. As Rice has already capitulated, Gates is the only remaining holdout against the new Iran policy.



No one at the CIA will be punished for 9/11. The Aug. 21 release of a 19-page declassified summary report from the office of the CIA inspector general looking into the failure to counter the threat posed by al-Qaeda from 1998 to 2001 places the blame firmly on the Agency's leadership. The former director of central intelligence, George Tenet, has frequently claimed that he "declared war" on al-Qaeda after the African embassy bombings of 1998, but Agency insiders have long noted that he failed to back up that declaration by committing any new resources or creating career incentives that would have drawn the best officers into the al-Qaeda task force. The task force eventually consisted of only 19 officers, most of whom were junior-level and lacking the necessary languages. There was a general failure of leadership at the CIA among Deputy Director John McLaughlin, Director of Operations James Pavitt, and Chief of the Counter Terrorism Center Cofer Black.

All of the underperforming former leaders are doing quite well. Tenet recently completed a tour touting his book *At the Center of the Storm*, for which he received a \$4-million advance; McLaughlin is the resident talking head national-security expert on CNN and sits on several defense-contractor boards; Pavitt is a principal with Brent Scowcroft's consulting firm; and Black now has his own security-services company that has a number of exclusive contracts with the CIA and the Department of Defense. The report recommended disciplinary action against the CIA leadership for its failure to perform adequately, but this advice was rejected by the two CIA directors who succeeded Tenet, Porter Goss and Michael Hayden.

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Open Fire

The U.S. needlessly inflamed Iraq in the vain hope of sparking a democratic revolution. We got an inferno instead.

By Paul W. Schroeder

I WRITE AS AN HISTORIAN, offering no special expertise on current American politics or the military and political situation in Iraq and promising no new facts or ideas. Trying to say something original about the Iraq imbroglio is like trying to invent new letters for the alphabet—impossible and pointless. I propose instead to present familiar facts in another way, believing that sometimes ideas, individually well known and in the mainstream, in different combinations suggest an unexpected conclusion.

I also assume that history counts, that the prevalent American historical perspectives on this war are inadequate and misleading, and that a sounder sense of history can not only free us from the tyranny of misleading historical analogies but also suggest different and better ones. While the past does not predict the future, and no historian should pretend to be a prophet, one indispensable way to look into the future is to walk carefully back into the past.

That means starting with recent history, inquiring how six years of global war on terror and five years of regular and counterinsurgency war in Iraq leave the U.S. now facing two apparently unquenchable fires of insurgency, terrorism, and civil war—fires that threaten the entire Middle East and adjacent areas, including Pakistan, as well as South Asia, Central Asia, Europe, and North Africa. While taking note of American intentions, aims, motives, and agendas—declared and undeclared—and the

debates over these, I will concentrate, as historians should, more on what the American government actually did in its supposed efforts to prevent and then fight these fires, what its actions objectively constituted within the international system, and what results they produced. In history, especially in international affairs, results count more than intentions, and the most important results are very often the ironic, unintended ones.

PREVENTING THE FIRE

Two major facts must be recognized at the outset: the fire in Iraq (though not Afghanistan) could have been prevented, and the American government deliberately decided against doing so. These are not controversial assertions but undeniable facts. Other questions about preventing fires at this time remain debatable—whether the attacks of 9/11 might have been averted or blunted by better intelligence and quicker action, whether the Clinton administration could have weakened al-Qaeda earlier, whether a more determined campaign in Afghanistan could have destroyed al-Qaeda and prevented further terrorism. But this much is certain: first, the Bush administration, supported by most of the Congress and the American people, decided to treat an alleged potential threat of explosion emanating from Iraq as more imminent and dangerous than the actual fire burning in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and else-

where; and second, it chose against resistance at home and widespread opposition from the international community not to use existing, standard methods of fire prevention.

Much of this—the priority the U.S. gave Iraq over Afghanistan and al-Qaeda and the choice of preventive war—is universally acknowledged. Astonishingly, however, the equally important and undeniable fact that its policy in 2002-03 deliberately rejected international methods for fire prevention in Iraq has still not been squarely faced, much less accepted. This gets ignored or swept aside by disputes over other questions, arguably interesting and important but not central—Saddam Hussein's nature and intentions, Iraq's capabilities, the existence or not of WMD, the motives and aims of America's leaders, the quality and use of American intelligence, the genuine or deceptive character of arguments for military action, and so on.

This shell game, whether it represents a deliberate tactic or not, has led Americans to misunderstand the struggle at the UN that culminated in America's failure to gain a Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq and its decision to proceed without one. The American public has been led to believe that the sole, decisive issue was whether Iraq possessed WMD or active programs to develop them. If so, military action would have automatically been justified and needed. This remains the

administration's defense of the decision for preventive war: along with other countries and on the basis of reasonable intelligence, it genuinely considered Saddam's weapons a threat to which the only effective response was force.

That completely distorts the debate. It was not simply over whether Saddam possessed WMD and/or active weapons programs, with everyone agreeing that military action was required if he did. The contest was over two distinct questions. The first was about facts and evidence. Had Iraq's weapons and programs already been sufficiently proved (the American position), or should the UN arms inspectors led by Hans Blix be given more time to make sure? The second, even more important from the standpoint of international politics and law, was about the best response. If the threat proved real, should the international community immediately authorize military action or first expand the existing UN-authorized sanctions against Iraq to try to force Saddam to surrender his weapons and submit to international controls?

The choice therefore lay between the American position that the threat was already proved, that other methods would take too long and be ineffective, and that only military action could deal with it, and the arguments of others, led by France, for more time to make sure of the threat and, should it prove real, for using standard methods and instruments of containment, deterrence, and coercive diplomacy before resorting to military action. In other words, it was a choice between starting a fire in the Middle East to counter one allegedly already smoldering and about to break out and trying fire prevention first.

On both scores, the American position proved wrong and its opponents' right—and once again Americans have largely missed the significance of this. The failure to find any evidence of WMD

or active programs after conquering and occupying Iraq is not, as is constantly supposed, important chiefly because it undermines the official rationale and justification for the war and shows that the administration manipulated prewar intelligence in order to deceive the American people. Whether or not those charges are true is not the real issue. The inability to locate WMD proved precisely what opponents of war had earlier contended: traditional international methods of containment, deterrence, and coercive diplomacy not only could work in the new age of terror, but in fact had worked. Iraq had no WMD because the previous decade of sanctions and pressure had effectively deterred Saddam from reviving his earlier programs. Thus, by insisting on military action, the U.S. aborted a long-established international protocol for fire prevention that had already succeeded in Iraq. It ignited a fire supposedly to counter another fire that was already effectively extinguished.

STARTING THE FIRE

The U.S. acted in Iraq not as a fire brigade but as an arsonist. This does not describe the administration's aims, but something more fundamental—the objective character of the American decision in the context of international politics. The motives were mixed, but a central reality remains: the Bush administration opted for war because it considered it intrinsically a good idea. No one can seriously doubt this.

The administration has always acknowledged, even boasted of, the war's preemptive (actually, preventive) character. It never seriously claimed that the U.S. had been attacked or immediately threatened by Iraq—a claim too preposterous to believe. The initial military success inspired great celebrations of the war's benefits for America, the Middle East, and the world.

One must therefore consider why this was so, what general mindset lay behind starting the fire, what its particular intent and anticipated effects were. It was supposed to be multi-purpose, first of all preventive, like fires deliberately set by the Forest Service to preempt bigger natural ones—in the famous phrase, to make sure that the smoking gun would not turn into a mushroom cloud. It was also—if one can seriously envision this—supposed to be a surgically precise firestorm. It would kill or drive out the criminal inhabitants of a particular building in a dangerous, unstable, crowded neighborhood without destroying the structure or spreading the fire to the whole city. The fire-strike, moreover, as launched and executed in spectacular fashion, was unaccompanied by serious planning or preparation for extinguishing it and repairing the building. Indeed, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld flatly prohibited this. The fire-strike was expected to be not only surgical but also purgative and curative, driving tyranny and terrorism from Iraq while also bringing peace, freedom, democracy, ethnic, religious, and national reconciliation, and the blessings of a market economy across the region. It would further be self-limiting, dying out on its own and preventing other fires from breaking out, and would promote new constructive activity. The damaged building would be rebuilt better than before by new owners, with no further American exertion required beyond leadership and advice.

The mindset behind this fire was thus a truly extraordinary, heroic example of a phenomenon all too common in international politics: utopian optimism. This is not the mild verdict it might seem. Utopianism is extremely dangerous in international politics, and this particular kind—reckless, ignorant, arrogant, overconfident, and oblivious to logic, facts, and history—is arguably the worst variety.

FIGHTING THE FIRE

After deliberately refusing to plan and provide for extinguishing the fire it had started and doing its best to silence the growing number of calls for doing so, the administration tardily discovered that it had a real insurgency on its hands. The story of how this unanticipated fire started and developed is both too complicated and too familiar to rehearse here, but three general points are important for our purposes.

The first is that the U.S. had chances to dampen the fire it had started, if not entirely extinguish it, and rejected them because doing so would interfere with other goals. The best opportunity to end the fire by simply letting it burn itself out came after the downfall of Saddam's regime and the end of military operations in May 2003, when the first American commander of the occupation, retired Gen. Jay Garner, proposed withdrawing American troops and letting the Iraqis sort things out for themselves. Given the size and character of the American forces and the lack of preparation for an effective occupation, this was logical. But it would have sacrificed the dream of molding Iraq and the entire Middle East according to America's image and the plan to make Iraq the central base for U.S. regional hegemony.

So Garner was replaced by L. Paul Bremer, and a different, more intrusive occupation ensued. Having started the war because it wanted to, the U.S. failed to end it because it did not really want to—that is, it would not pay the price of sacrificing some goals and assuming attendant risks.

The second fact to emphasize is that in fighting the insurgent fire in Iraq, the U.S. has mainly succeeded in feeding it. This conclusion will not surprise anyone with any sense of history—that war tends to feed on war is one of its oldest and most recurrent themes—and is no

longer controversial. A huge literature supports it, the most recent National Intelligence Estimate confirms it, and no amount of spin or denial by the president's men will make it go away.

Most Americans have come to accept what many analysts have long seen, but they still discuss the reasons for this phenomenon and the dangers it presents in old, superficial ways. The question remains essentially, "How and where did the occupation go wrong, and who was responsible?" The answers almost invariably blame contingent, tactical factors—the wrong kinds of weapons, training, and military tactics; too few troops on the ground; too little knowledge of Iraq; incompetence, inexperience, and corruption; crimes and scandals; political and administrative blunders; and the like. An interesting variant, more popular today than ever, is to blame the Iraqis themselves—not merely the terrorists and insurgents, of course, but also and especially the Iraqi government for failing to do its job.

The discussion of the dangers of a prolonged insurgency and embattled occupation is just as superficial, concentrating mainly on American casualties, the strain on our Armed Forces, the financial and political costs of the war, and the dangers to the homeland of spreading terrorism. Much less attention centers on the most imminent and important threat. Iraq itself is being destroyed—perhaps has been destroyed—both as a state and as a functioning society. Leaving aside the enormous human tragedy, no stable Middle East is conceivable with Iraq as a political, social, religious, ethnic, and economic black hole, creating problems for world peace and stability that are almost incalculable.

Thus, after five years of counterproductive failure, the dominant American perspective on the Iraq War remains marked by endless vistas of myopia.

Concentrating attention on tactical failures enables those who decided on and promoted this war to escape accountability and allows its current defenders to justify the original policy while condemning its execution and continuing the war. It lets Americans scapegoat the Iraqis for results for which they were not primarily responsible. The fact is that the U.S. destroyed the former Iraqi governmental apparatus and created a new government under conditions that virtually guaranteed that it would be dysfunctional. It broke the Iraqis' legs and now complains because they cannot jump the high hurdles. Most importantly, emphasizing the tactical and contingent causes of failure promotes the idea that the war can still be won or further failure averted by changing tactics and adding resources and effort—the rationale behind the current surge. Similarly, concentrating on the immediate costs and dangers of the war for Americans encourages the belief that if these can be reduced to tolerable levels, the problem will basically be solved.

Both views are not merely incredibly shallow but immensely harmful. They ignore the central fact that these tactical and contingent reasons for failure are not accidental. They flow predictably from the nature of the enterprise. The deeper reasons for failure, the fundamental reasons that fighting the war has fed the war, lie in fatal contradictions inherent in the war itself and the policy that led to it and are thus strategic, structural, and irremediable.

First come contradictions in the goals of the war, already noted. One can no more conceive of creating an independent, self-governing, liberal-constitutional democratic Iraq to be America's satellite, ally, and base for the projection of U.S. power in the region through an American conquest and occupation than one can envision dry rain or snowy blackness.

To take just one of many contradictions involved: if miraculously a genuinely independent democratic Iraq did emerge from an American occupation, it would not long remain a dependent American ally but would act in its own interests, which are far from identical with those of the United States.

This proposition is axiomatic, or ought to be, but it is not at all abstract or theoretical. The attempt by the United States to achieve ends in Iraq that are inherently self-contradictory and therefore impossible has led directly and indirectly to many of the tactical, contingent blunders re-inforcing the insurgency.

One example: by common agreement, no one thing has done more to destroy America's image and prestige in Iraq and to feed the fires of insurgency and terrorism there and elsewhere than the revelations about torture and inhumanity at Abu Ghraib. The American response has been either to try to minimize and deflect their impact by blaming and punishing a few low-level offenders while shielding those higher up the chain of command or to demand investigations

who supported and benefited from it, without arousing violent resistance, predictably promoting a vicious circle of reprisals and atrocities on both sides.

Equally striking is the mismatch between the goals of the war and the historical means and process supposed to achieve them. In Iraq, military conquest and armed occupation by Western forces were supposed quickly to produce a liberal, constitutional, democratic state with a free-market economy and a strong, stable civil society. Parts of the West, including the United States, have now more or less achieved these goals—but only through an historical process that, ignoring its roots in ancient Greece and Rome, took about a thousand years and involved numerous stages—medieval constitutionalism; the administered police (i.e. social discipline) state; the constitutional *Rechtsstaat*; the parliamentary state, liberal-representative but not democratic; and finally, liberal-constitutional democracy. The evolution involved deep, wrenching social, economic, intellectual, and cultural changes—religious reformation, class

through one short easy war. What were we thinking?

This is not to say, as some do, that Iraqis, Arabs, Muslims in general, or other non-Westerners cannot achieve liberal-constitutional representative democratic government because their religion, culture, ideology, values, and history render them unfit. I consider that view profoundly mistaken, if not a lie. Nor does this imply that non-Westerners can learn nothing from the Western experience. It is full of lessons, positive and negative, for West and East alike. I am saying only that if Iraqis and others are to gain the blessings of freedom and democracy, they cannot get them this way.

Even more pertinent, they cannot acquire them at our hands. Americans, especially in this administration, seem oblivious to the disconnect between the characteristics and persona of America as a country and people and the ideals it supposedly pursues in Iraq. The U.S. is Western; it is imperialist in the sense of leading Western expansion into the non-Western world; it is overwhelmingly Christian, strongly pro-Israel, individualistic, and materialist in spirit, culture, and lifestyle; it is capitalist, rich, and extremely powerful. Unlike other American traits like self-preoccupation, provincialism, and widespread ignorance of other peoples' languages, culture, and history, these are basic American characteristics that we will not change, and in many respects should not want to. Collectively, however, they disqualify America from being a direct agent of the fundamental changes we are trying to promote in Iraq or the Arab and Muslim worlds. The United States is an alien presence in that world, and a highly intrusive one, with bases, fleets, capital, and corporations, an invasive and subversive culture, and now an occupying Army. It is not merely the way the United States has conducted itself in

THE UNITED STATES IS AN ALIEN PRESENCE WITH BASES, FLEETS, CAPITAL, AND CORPORATIONS, AN INVASIVE CULTURE, AND NOW AN OCCUPYING ARMY.

into who was responsible, all the while denying that this ever represented American policy. This has effectively swept the main fact under the rug (for Americans, not others): this sort of scandal is more or less inescapable in this kind of conflict. Though it was promoted by some shocking decisions by high-ranking military and civilian authorities and should have been foreseen and handled very differently, it also flowed naturally from the war and occupation itself. One cannot expect to conquer a people, overthrowing its government and ruining and humiliating those

struggle, scientific discovery, technological innovation, massive developments in education, literacy, and the growth of a public sphere, industrialization, modernization, urbanization, and so on. It was tortuous, convoluted, and twisted almost beyond belief, full of blind alleys and wrong turns, choked with violence, war, imperialism, and revolution, marked by as many defeats and failures as victories and advances, costly and dangerous, with numerous times when the process seemed hopelessly stalled or defeated. Yet we proposed to bring about this transformation in Iraq

Iraq that has fomented resistance and turned it into a breeding ground for more Islamic terrorism. It is the simple fact that being what we are, we are there at all.

This is not to designate the U.S. as the main problem in the region and its exit, bag and baggage, as the answer. The central problems of the Middle East are unquestionably internal and will certainly persist—probably get worse, at least temporarily, when the United States leaves. I am only stating the obvious: that we—being what we are and, in the main, must be and will remain—cannot solve those problems or meet the dangers they pose to our interests by our direct efforts, especially military ones. However executed, these are bound overall to be self-stultifying and counterproductive.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION IN THE MEDIA, THE LITERATURE, AND THE POLITICAL ARENA HAS OVERWHELMINGLY CENTERED ON THE QUESTION “WHAT WENT WRONG WITH THE WAR?”—NOT “WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS WAR AND WITH US?”

This conclusion seems too obvious to need proof, but let me try to illustrate with an historical example. At one point in the 16th century, when Western Christendom was being torn apart by the Protestant Reformation and the attendant struggles and wars, the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman proposed that he be invited to arbitrate the theological disputes and help restore peace in Europe. This may not have been a cynical ploy. He was both a very powerful and fairly enlightened ruler. His favorite wife was a Christian, and Christians in the Ottoman Empire, though discriminated against, were recognized as People of the Book and were not widely persecuted or forcibly converted to Islam. Yet can anyone suppose that European Christians, however divided internally, could seriously consider this offer as a

sincere attempt to help them, coming as it did from infidels and historic enemies of Christianity who had just conquered huge sections of southeastern Europe, almost capturing Vienna, and still menaced the whole Mediterranean?

There is an obvious reply to the argument of this essay: even if it is basically true, it is by now outdated and useless—one more pointless discussion of how the U.S. got into its current straits when the only relevant question now is how to get out. The lessons preached here have already been learned. Most Americans recognize that the war has been a failure and want to see the troops brought home. The president is highly unpopular, mainly because of his conduct of the war; his own supporters are abandoning him or threatening to. And the original grandiose war aims have been drastically

scaled down even by the administration. Basically both parties and the country are now trying only to escape with a whole skin and avoid worse disasters; the only useful question is how to do so.

That response, for many an obvious ploy to escape accountability, is superficially plausible but nonetheless wrong. Leave aside the consideration that historical truth, honesty, and candid self-appraisal are intrinsically good, and vital for the souls of states as well as individuals. The governing truth is that, in the main, Americans have not learned the most important lessons from this war, and many powerful individuals and groups are doing their best to keep them from doing so. The public senses vaguely that the war has been a failure, but does not genuinely understand how and why it failed. Americans have

turned against it and to a lesser degree have come to think that it was inherently a bad idea only because it has turned out badly—lasted too long, cost too many lives and too much money, seems headed toward stalemate or defeat rather than victory, and is making terrorism worse. In other words, most now consider the war something that has gone wrong but not something that was wrong. Public discussion in the media, the literature, and the political arena has therefore overwhelmingly centered on the question “What went wrong with the war?”—not “What is wrong with this war and with us?”

The argument here is that the war never went wrong; it always was wrong, in specific, basic ways. The distinction is fundamental, eminently practical, and involves lessons that the U.S.—its government, elites, and broad public alike—has not yet learned. It accounts for the fact that all of the current plans for getting out of Iraq are not really plans for genuinely getting out, but plans for staying on in one way or another so as to minimize further losses, recoup sunk costs, and protect particular interests. It means that until we squarely face what we have not hitherto faced as a nation—what this war represented, what we have done, and what this says about who and what we are—we will not be willing or able to take the practical steps necessary to contain the fire now burning, dampen and extinguish it as much as possible, and do what is necessary at home and abroad to prevent an even greater fire next time.

[Editor's note: This is the first half of a two-part essay. The second installment will appear in our next issue.]

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Skeleton Crew

The speed with which Republican politicians are disappearing from public life is a marvel second only to their uniformly poor quality. Though a thinning of the herd

is overdue, a more drastic culling is afoot. But near the horizon, where the bold names of the future should be arrayed, the prospects are dismal.

The impulse to cleanse the GOP establishment of its lackeys, dilettantes, phony experts, and professional moderates—normally to be obeyed like a survival instinct—confronts a problem: few have been prepared to fill the ravaged ranks. The conservative movement, such as it is, faces the most comprehensive credibility problem of its existence.

Rot starts at the top, and certainly there it's plainest to see. Karl Rove, the overhyped guru who was good at winning elections but not particularly useful at anything else, is representative of the Bush legacy to the party machine—has-beens now useless to the organization whose reputation they so clumsily ruined.

The Bush administration presents an array of figureheads whose money is no good. In whose rolodex will Randall Tobias, AIDS czar and disgraced escort servicio, remain? Whither Michael “Brownie” Brown or Bernard Kerik, who never even had the chance to resign? When shall we again see former cabinet members Christie Todd Whitman and Paul O'Neill? Alberto Gonzales and Harriet Miers? Will Colin Powell return? Not even those who stormed out of the White House have another lease on life.

Every hot shot who rose under Bush now sinks into the shadows. Karen Hughes is irrelevant, and Paul Wolfowitz broods in his visiting scholar's office at the American Enterprise Institute. Donald Rumsfeld will not thrice become

defense secretary. Nor Dick Cheney president, nor Michael Chertoff, despite the rumors, attorney general. The gloom extended to those who might otherwise have enjoyed lengthy, storied careers. Ask Condoleezza Rice, reduced to long-ing for the cool halls of Stanford.

For the Bush refugee, there is but one hope for remaining in politics—Republican triumph in 2008. If hope, as Emily Dickinson claimed, is the thing with feathers, the fantasy of an '08 rescue is for the birds. Rudy Giuliani or Fred Thompson could beat Hillary Clinton in a general election. But if they do not, Norman Podhoretz and Liz Cheney seem condemned, at best, to the limbo reserved for Richard Holbrooke—the wax museum of the think-tank circuit. And if the Republican candidate goes down to defeat, blame may spread to anyone associated with the outgoing administration.

If, that is, there is anyone left inside the Beltway to bother with the attribution of blame. Republican fortunes in Congress, already dimmed, will soon lose the comforting bulk of longtime heavies who have masked for years a fundamental weakness reaching back to the fall of Newt Gingrich. Dennis Hastert and John Warner are retiring. Henry Hyde and Bill Frist are already gone. The present is clogged with the detritus of Larry Craig and Mark Foley. The future is not with the well-regarded but second-string John Boehner.

Even if John McCain becomes president, his is a lineage, like all the others, with no clear successor. Giuliani is a one-man species. Romney is a Republi-

can in a region utterly devoid of them. Thompson and Gingrich are faces from a political yesterday. The elders are too late for another go, and the youngsters—Mike Huckabee, Sam Brownback, and company—face John Edwards's future as premature losers. These are last chances all around.

This is to say nothing of the intellectual roots of a conservative movement that once towered over an ossified and unthinking Left. The career path for an enterprising young writer inclined to the Right seems to involve racing through the ordeal of defending the president toward the publication of what one author called a “shiny booklike object.”

Prudence and contemplation no longer hold sway in a political culture where the answers are already given and the purpose of research is to find the numbers to match. A movement designed to rescue the government from itself now finds itself in need of rescue from the luxury of government power. Meanwhile, op-eds appear in the public prints as if, simply because he has an idea, the author is entitled to be of consequence. Runs of hyperbole belie notes of desperation.

In ancient Rome, the word “decimation” was coined to denote that ritual of military punishment whereby nine of ten men in an unacceptable cohort were made to kill the tenth. This first wave of failure now wracking the Republicans is far less vicious but no less damaging. If the ranks are not replenished and the party not restored, the political decimation to come will be nearly as bloody as the real thing. Only instead of an army at reduced strength, the GOP will find itself without top brass. ■

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Run for the Border

Republican candidates reinvent themselves as immigration restrictionists.

By W. James Antle III

WHILE THE LOWER-TIER candidates have occasionally lobbed spitballs at the frontrunners, the contest for the Republican presidential nomination has mostly been a gentlemanly affair. The immigration issue threatens to disrupt that comity. In August, Mitt Romney launched an uncharacteristically sharp attack on Rudy Giuliani's leniency toward illegal immigrants as mayor of New York City.

"If you look at lists compiled on websites of sanctuary cities, New York is at the top of the list when Mayor Giuliani was mayor," Romney said. "He instructed city workers not to provide information to the federal government that would allow them to enforce the law. New York City was the poster child for sanctuary cities in the country."

Romney's campaign followed up with a radio advertisement that doesn't mention his rival by name, but pointedly includes New York in a list of havens for illegal immigration. "Immigration laws don't work if they're ignored," the announcer intones. "That's the problem with cities like Newark, San Francisco, and New York City that adopt sanctuary policies." The subliminal message: don't trust San Francisco Democrats or New York Republicans to guard the border.

Giuliani supporters disputed the "amnesty capital" designation and fired back with some tough words about Romney's own record. They quickly uncovered resolutions by three cities in Massachusetts—Cambridge, Somerville, and Orleans—proudly declaring themselves sanctuary cities. Peter King, a pro-Giuliani congressman with some credibility on the immigration issue,

charged that, as governor, Romney "simply ignored" these cities' determination to flout the law and looked the other way when illegal aliens demonstrated at the state capitol. Randy Mastro, one of Giuliani's deputy mayors, told the *New York Observer*, "We have a word here in New York for what Mitt Romney is trying to do here—it is called chutzpah."

Chutzpah it may be, but both candidates are reinventing themselves as immigration enforcers. Neither Giuliani nor Romney was especially vehement about border security before the presidential campaign beckoned. While Giuliani inherited New York sanctuary-city policy from his Democratic predecessors, he defended it from critics and Congress alike. "There are times when undocumented immigrants must have a substantial degree of protection," he once told an audience in Minneapolis.

In 1996, America's Mayor unsuccessfully sued to block two federal laws that cracked down on lax local enforcement practices. He also established himself as a harsh critic of efforts to curb illegal immigration during the 1990s. "Some of the hardest-working and most productive people in this city are undocumented aliens," Giuliani said at a press conference in 1994. "If you come here and you work hard and you happen to be in an undocumented status, you're one of the people who we want in this city. You're somebody that we want to protect, and we want you to get out from under what is often a life of being like a fugitive, which is really unfair."

Illegals are welcome, and enforcement is unfair. Giuliani stopped short of

engraved invitations, but the message was clear—and obviously at odds with his current pledge to "end illegal immigration." In fact, Giuliani once said that such a goal was impossible. In a 1996 speech to Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, he declined to "defend" illegal immigration, but contended that "the federal government may never be able to stop illegal immigration completely."

Romney was less permissive. He might not have gone after liberal city councils that passed feel-good resolutions laying out the welcome mat, but he generally took the pro-enforcement side when immigration bills reached his desk. Romney opposed giving illegal aliens drivers licenses and vetoed in-state tuition for them—even if the uproar created by Boston talk-radio hosts like Howie Carr played a bigger role in getting the legislature to reconsider its position.

But on Beacon Hill, Romney was hardly the Tancredo-style restrictionist one hears on the hustings in Iowa. As late as 2005, he supported a "path to citizenship" for illegal immigrants and a version of amnesty. And some aspects of his record are mere window dressing. Romney's vaunted agreement with the federal government to deputize state troopers to assist in immigration enforcement was signed just three weeks before he left office and was immediately revoked by his Democratic successor. Romney continues to tout the policy even though no state police officers ever got to participate.

Now everyone is getting into the act. Giuliani pledges to stop illegal immigration cold, claiming that technological

innovations have rendered his '90s fatalism about the borders obsolete. He also concedes that so-called "comprehensive legislation" is a non-starter. "It seems to me you first control the borders. Give everyone a little relief from the debate for awhile," the *Washington Post* quoted Giuliani as saying. "Then we revisit in it a situation of more order, more confidence the border can be controlled."

Even John McCain is coming around. Months ago, he supported the "g-ddamn fence" along the U.S.-Mexican border only grudgingly. And when Romney came out against the comprehensive immigration reform bill earlier this year, the Arizona senator replied bitterly, "Maybe his solution will be to get out his small-varmint gun and drive those Guatemalans off his lawn." Now the GOP's leading proponent of amnesty favors enforcement first.

Sam Brownback has also been moving to the right on the issue, going so far as to reverse his initial vote to advance this year's Senate immigration bill once it became clear the legislation was going to fail. (Critics will likely remember that he voted for amnesty before he voted against it.)

Mike Huckabee, who once complained that much of the opposition to liberal immigration policy was "driven by just sheer racism," now says, "Seal the border."

The conservative base is so overwhelmingly opposed to anything that can be construed as amnesty that serious Republican presidential contenders have had to adjust their platforms accordingly. A grassroots movement powerful enough to defeat two bipartisan immigration bills backed by Big Labor, Big Business, and the White House is powerful enough to derail someone's candidacy in the Iowa GOP caucuses. This is especially true in a field where so many aspirants already have problems on litmus-test issues like tax cuts and abortion.

So should immigration reformers be untroubled by the Republican candidates' past records? "Here we are as conservatives expending an enormous amount of energy to effectively punish candidates for agreeing with us," *National Review* editor Rich Lowry recently objected. "Since when did it become a bad thing for a candidate to realize the influence of conservatives ... in the nominating process and react accordingly?"

Unfortunately, it isn't clear to what extent these newly minted Minutemen genuinely agree with conservatives. Giuliani, for example, still favors an eventual amnesty. McCain presumably does as well. Romney has rhetorically embraced what the Center for Immigration Studies calls "attrition through enforcement," but has not yet laid out a detailed enough plan to determine how far he has traveled from his earlier position. Fred Thompson is equally strong in his rhetoric and vague in his proposals. To appeal to restrictionists, Giuliani is promising to "end" illegal immigration, and Huckabee is promising to "seal" the border. Informed immigration restrictionists know that you can't do either of these things 100 percent. Thus, in the candidates' attempts to pander to people concerned about immigration, they actually embrace a caricature.

A key question is whether these candidates have embraced enforcement substantively or tactically. Most major amnesty proposals have come with the promise of stepped-up enforcement. Over the last three years, each attempt at an immigration deal has contained more provisions aimed at tightening the borders and policing workplaces—and each has fallen apart as these provisions have been found wanting.

Paradoxically, amnesty supporters could gain credibility by shelving their guest-worker programs for a few years and engaging in some high-profile

enforcement. If their plans result in a substantial reduction in the illegal population, serious restrictionists should consider taking the deal. The gambit would lessen the impact of any subsequent liberalization and would be at least as risky for immigration enthusiasts who would have to advocate future amnesties without enforcement add-ons.

But if the enforcement efforts are largely cosmetic—or even designed to fail—the pressure for amnesty will grow. This is where the candidates' intentions and political will matter more than their current campaign speeches. Like the authors of the Senate immigration bill, Giuliani promises to protect the illegals "who are productive, decent people" and "throw out" the criminals among them. McCain emphasizes that his enforcement proposals represent a "first step" and still has a section on his campaign website defending the comprehensive approach.

Candidates taking a harder line also deserve careful examination to see whether they are offering constructive proposals or just making symbolic appeals. Cutting federal aid to sanctuary cities, to name just one example, is currently popular. Yet it would probably do less to reduce illegal immigration than better employment verification or more reliable sanctions against companies that hire unlawful workers. Poorly implemented, it could also result in a series of public-relations disasters for the pro-enforcement side.

Despite the best efforts of the party's donors, its national chairman, and its titular head in the White House, Republican politicians have been moving in the right direction on immigration. Don't forget that this is the result of constant conservative pressure and protest, and not always their good intentions. ■

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Breaking Planks

Does a Giuliani win mean social conservatives lose?

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

IMPROBABLY, a twice-divorced, pro-choice, pro-civil unions gun controller who made his city a safe haven for illegal immigrants commands the lead in all national GOP polls. After Rudy Giuliani announced his intention to seek the presidency, pundits lined up to declare that his campaign could never survive the long march through the heartland where he'd face a phalanx of values voters: the rifle-totin', mega-church attendin', "we're barefoot and pregnant and proud of it" Republican base. Yet nine months later—while other candidates jump in and out of the top tier—Rudy remains on top.

Giuliani's record of promoting a mobbed-up crony to a top law-enforcement post, his habit of berating constituents, his endorsement of Mario Cuomo over a fellow Republican, his support for partial-birth abortion, even his occasional public cross-dressing haven't united the conservative movement into full opposition to his candidacy. While there are notable dissenters, many social conservatives are talking themselves into supporting Hizzoner. Others are even joining his ranks.

Giuliani frequently acknowledges his disagreements with social conservatives. He told a standing-room-only audience at CPAC that he agrees with the base about 80 percent of the time. "I'm probably describing your relationship to your spouse or your parents," he consoled.

He has sought to shift the debate to friendlier turf. Giuliani highlights his promise to make permanent a \$10,000 tax credit for adoption expenses. He

also favors the status quo, whereby federal funds can only be used to pay for abortions in "hard cases" such as rape or incest. These explicit concessions, however, are small compared to the implicit promises he and his campaign make to social conservatives.

"Rudy is an exceptional candidate for social conservatives," says Ohio GOP activist Josiah Schmidt. He founded SoConsForRudy.com—a website with a growing list of contributors—in part to soothe the fears of pro-lifers. "Giuliani has already promised to uphold the Partial Birth Abortion Ban, uphold the Hyde Amendment (which bans almost all federal funding for abortion), [and] appoint conservative judges in the mold of John Roberts and Samuel Alito and Antonin Scalia," he says. Schmidt zestfully declares that Rudy has promised "a concrete statistical emphasis on reducing abortions."

Describing the narrow powers of the presidency in terms of legislation and Giuliani's oft-repeated promise to send "originalists" to the Supreme Court, Schmidt repeats what is being whispered in many conservative circles: in his constitutionally limited role as president, "Rudy will be functionally pro-life."

But other conservatives insist that the executive branch has a broader role to play in advancing pro-life goals than Schmidt suggests. "To say the president can't do much is not accurate," says David Osteen, a spokesman for the National Right to Life Committee. As an example, he cites President Bush's diplomatic delegation that "successfully lob-

bied the UN to take an anti-human cloning position." He adds to this the long list of appointments to the Justice Department and other federal agencies that can influence abortion rights and the rights of pro-lifers. The consequences of nominating a pro-choice Republican become impossible to ignore.

The NRLC has a petition at the center of its homepage asking that Republicans choose a pro-life candidate. Though it's obviously targeted at him, the petition doesn't mention the former mayor by name, and Osteen makes only parenthetical reference to him when explaining his group's position: "Every [Republican] candidate running at this time, with the exception of former Mayor Giuliani, is pro-life."

For Osteen, Rudy's durable national lead does not guarantee a lock on the nomination. He notes, "Giuliani stays in the 20s nationwide—never breaking above 30 percent," indicating that once other candidates drop out of the race, social conservatives will coalesce around one candidate and overwhelm Giuliani. "He's had ample opportunity to evaluate and re-evaluate his position ... and he has re-affirmed his pro-abortion convictions. That's going to be pretty troublesome." Osteen believes the lay of the land will be more apparent after Fred Thompson's campaign gets running.

The hope that another candidate will emerge to challenge Rudy's national lead animates many social conservatives. Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council declared bluntly, "When people hear Rudy Giuliani speak about tax-

payer-funded abortions, gay rights, and gun control, they don't hear a choice, they hear an echo of Hillary Clinton."

Regardless of these murmurs on the Right, the Giuliani campaign has aggressively sought out social conservatives to fill staff positions as a sign of good faith. Schmidt believes Giuliani's legal team has impeccable credentials. Miguel Estrada, a conservative lawyer whose nomination to the D.C. Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals was frustrated by a Democrat-led filibuster, is a close adviser to the campaign. Ted Olson, former U.S. solicitor general, was an early Giuliani supporter. "I admire his character, his capacity for leadership, his instincts, and his principles," the conservative stalwart said in February. One campaign aide speculated that Olson was a likely candidate for attorney general in a Giuliani administration.

Despite Giuliani's promise to name strict constructionists to the courts, some observers believe that, should he become the nominee, Giuliani will limit conservative influence in the judiciary. Ramesh Ponnuru observed in *National Review*, "Giuliani's nomination would change everything. By moving the politics of abortion to the left, his nomination would also—regardless of Giuliani's intentions now—move the politics of judicial confirmations to the left. If the range of acceptable opinions on abortion policy narrowed, so would the range of acceptable opinions on *Roe*."

Ponnuru concluded, "His nomination would ... set back causes that most Republicans have rightly considered important, and for that very reason could weaken conservatism generally. That is reason enough to reject him."

Campaign staffers counter that a Giuliani nomination would actually strengthen the GOP by helping elect Republicans to the House, Senate, and state offices nationwide. Bill Paxton, a former New York congressman and

national co-chair of the Giuliani campaign, points out, "There will be two seats in play in New Hampshire ... and several key districts in Florida, including the Foley seat. The list goes on: Wyoming and state after state." He's certain that Giuliani's broad appeal will help Republicans up and down the ticket in these purple states. "And those are going to be conservatives," Paxton confidently states.

Giuliani's opponents have an easy retort. While his popularity and regional base may put blue states like Connecticut and New Jersey in play for 2008, his nomination could easily dispirit conservative voters in Ohio and Tennessee. The party's pro-life plank attracts many to the Republican tent who would otherwise vote for Democrats who speak more directly to their economic interests. For many Rust Belt voters, the choice between two parties that support abortion rights—one Wall Street and one blue-collar—is an easy one.

Even if the Giuliani campaign can't sell itself to conservatives on social policy or the potential for an electoral comeback, they can still market his image: Rudy will bust skulls. A law-and-order candidate can still appeal to socially conservative voters who dread Clintonian psychobabble and politically correct crime policy. "Rudy Giuliani changed New York City from a place we reviled to a place we admired," bragged one senior Giuliani campaign official.

"Tough" is the adjective of choice, in the campaign literature and on the lips of staffers. It's meant to resonate not only with war hawks but with Republican partisans. "Rudy is tough," Paxton explains. "As tough as Pelosi and Reid might think they are, Rudy Giuliani dealt with a Democrat City Council that was run like a fiefdom. He led there and dragged that city to the right. He beat them at every turn."

As the conservative movement

shifted from being a third force in American politics to being the base of the Republican Party, it has become more solicitous of the party's needs and more combative with the Democrats. The image of a New York prosecutor beating back Nancy Pelosi excites a cohort of voters who feel that Bush and other Republican leaders give in to pressure from the media and the opposition.

Giuliani makes a show of straining to earn conservative votes, referencing Reagan, dropping code words about judicial appointments, and even hiring staff to monitor and communicate with conservative bloggers. Yet his campaign straddles the fine line between working for conservatives and working them over.

There is an imperious, even arrogant quality to the campaign—undoubtedly influenced by the boss himself. Conservative allies insist that Giuliani will feel indebted to social conservatives should he win their support. But the tone from his campaign staff is reminiscent of a more unflattering New York trope: he's going to make them an offer they can't refuse. Paxton observes, "Going back to Eisenhower in '52, whoever has led the Gallup poll at this stage of the Republican nominating process has succeeded." Translation: We've already won. Cut your deals while you can.

After years of disappointment from the Bush administration, social conservatives are in desperate straits. Having lost the Republican House in 2006, and likely to sustain severe punishment in the Senate in 2008, the movement is politically bound and gagged. Giuliani's campaign claims to be the only heavy left on the street, wielding his tough-guy reputation like a baseball bat. He wants to help traditionalists out, to be a friend in despairing times.

Social conservatives have two disquieting questions to answer: Do we trust him? Do we have a choice? ■

Once More into the Breach

The neocon propaganda machine rolls toward Iran.

By Justin Logan

FORMER WHITE HOUSE chief of staff Andrew Card famously remarked that the reason the White House ramped up the case for the Iraq War in September was that “from a marketing point of view, you don’t introduce new products in August.” To judge from recent developments, Americans may look back on August 2007 as the month the country again turned toward war—with Iran.

The same network of think-tank analysts, media outlets, and government officials who brayed for war in Iraq have set their sights increasingly on Iran. Savvy as ever, they remain focused on consolidating public opinion and seem to be monitoring anti-Iran sentiment closely. *Weekly Standard* Deputy Online Editor Michael Goldfarb darkly warned in July that opponents of another Mideast war “shouldn’t be too surprised when [the] 60 percent [of Americans] opposing a war with Iran starts to dwindle—it has dropped five points in just the last six months.”

In late August, NYU professor and Afghanistan expert Barnett Rubin related that a Washington source had told him that the same neoconservative institutions that urged the country into Iraq were preparing to “roll out a campaign for war with Iran” after Labor Day. According to Rubin’s informant, “evidently they don’t think they’ll ever get majority support for this—they want something like 35-40 percent support, which in their book is ‘plenty.’” Rubin later told the *New Yorker*’s George Packer that a source at a neoconservative institution in Washington had con-

firmed that account, noting, “I am a Republican. I am a conservative. But I am not a raging lunatic. This is lunatic.”

The purportedly perfidious role of Iran in Iraq sits at the center of the case for war. One can hardly open a newspaper or political magazine without reading table-pounding condemnations of Tehran. The *Washington Post*’s editorialists declare that Iran “is waging war against the United States and trying to kill as many American soldiers as possible,” and Reuel Marc Gerecht of the American Enterprise Institute warns *Newsweek*’s readers that the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps “have long given aid to a varied list of terrorists, including, quite possibly, al Qaeda.”

The curious thing about the case against Iran, however, is that hawks have created this perception without providing so much as a Powell-at-the-UN-style dossier of evidence. Although administration officials have parroted claims against Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) for months, the charges are wholly based on inferential and nonspecific evidence that pales in comparison even to the trumped-up charges leveled against Iraq in 2002 and 2003.

A report entitled “Iran’s Proxy War against the United States and the Iraqi Government” was just published by *The Weekly Standard* in conjunction with the Institute for the Study of War, an apparently one-person think tank consisting of Kimberly Kagan, the wife of surge architect Frederick Kagan. Her prior public profile consisted mostly of

assessing the inevitable success of the surge for *The Weekly Standard*—even though she had been a participant in the group that planned the troop build-up in the first place.

The Weekly Standard report compiled nearly every press account of Iranian involvement in Iraq, gathered from dubious sources ranging from the terrorist group Mujahideen-e-Khalq to *New York Times* reporter and erstwhile Judith Miller accomplice Michael Gordon, as well as a variety of anonymous sources. The last lines of the report’s summary noted that “with [al-Qaeda in Iraq and the Sunni insurgency] increasingly under control, Iranian intervention is the next problem the Coalition must tackle.”

Emblematic of the selective reasoning in the Kagan report is one anecdote its author recounts. In describing a suspicious attack that killed five U.S. servicemen at an Iraqi base in Karbala in January, Kagan devotes two paragraphs to quoting a statement from Brig. Gen. Kevin Bergner that pointed out that the Iraqi suspects captured in connection with the attacks had implicated the Quds Force of the IRGC. What Kagan does not point out, although she cites the *Time* article that reported the information, is that the formal U.S. investigation into the attacks implicated the very Iraqi police with whom the American servicemen were embedded—not Tehran. According to *Time*, “the U.S.’s initial probe of the incident found no evidence of direct Iranian involvement. Instead, the picture that emerged cast suspicion chiefly on

senior Iraqi officials known to the Americans, as well as local thugs and associates of [Moqtada] al-Sadr.”

This incident represents one of the two significant problems with the claims that Iran is the root of our troubles in Iraq—let alone “at war” with us. First, the Bush administration has offered precious little conclusive evidence of Iranian “warfare” against U.S. troops—nothing close to the frenzied commentaries regarding Iran’s role in Iraq. Second, to the extent that Iran is involved with various factions in Iraq, those with which it is most deeply involved are the very same factions that are supportive of the Maliki government, which the U.S. government also supports. Thus, one is left with the tortured logic that claims our goal of proping up the Iraqi government is being undermined by Iranian support for ... the very same political factions that comprise the Iraqi government.

THE FACTIONS THAT THE IRANIANS ARE ACCUSED OF SUPPORTING AND ARMING ARE THE VERY SAME FACTIONS THAT CONTROL THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT.

The most important claim being made against Iran is that it is supplying sophisticated “explosively formed penetrators” or EFPs to various groups in Iraq that are using them to kill our soldiers. The pattern is for a military official to make a bold claim and then for a second official to substantially walk back the claim. Take, as one example, Gen. Peter Pace’s Feb. 2 declaration that the military was in possession of serial numbers that proved Iranian involvement in providing the materiel for EFPs to Iraqi militias. Less than a week later, Defense Secretary Robert Gates clarified, “I think that there are some serial numbers. There may be some markings on some of the projectile fragments that we found. I’m just frankly not specifically

certain myself of the details, but I understand there is pretty good evidence tying these EFPs to the Iranians.”

This form of argument—a bold but unsubstantiated claim followed by a softening or outright repudiation—is reminiscent of several of the nudge-nudge arguments offered by the administration in the run-up to war in Iraq. In the case of EFPs, *Jane’s Intelligence Digest* noted in June, “it is unclear ... that ‘made in Iran’ equates to ‘made by Iran.’” There are a variety of ways that weaponry of Iranian origins could make its way into Iraq. Its mere presence no more implies direction from Tehran than the loss of 190,000 American small arms in Iraq implies direction from Washington.

In addition, *Jane’s* reported, “uncertainties in the intelligence assessments have made it difficult to convince domestic or foreign audiences ... of the accuracy of these statements.” Foreign

audiences, perhaps, but the *Jane’s* authors may want to flick on Fox News or open the *Washington Post* editorial page to determine what domestic audiences are thinking. The phrase “difficult to convince” doesn’t come to mind when describing these audiences.

The second problem with the Iran blame game is that by and large the factions that the Iranians are accused of supporting and arming are the very same factions that control the Iraqi government. Both major Shia parties that comprise the Iraqi government have close ties to Iran, having been organized in exile there in the 1980s. Current U.S. strategy in Iraq is ostensibly based on consolidating enough support in the Iraqi government that U.S. troops can

eventually leave. At the same time, the Bush administration is blaming the Iraqi government’s number-one supporter in the region for not being supportive enough.

Such inconsistencies have led to friction between the governments in Baghdad and Washington. When U.S. forces captured two Iranian officials in December, they were at the home of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, head of one of Iraq’s two major Shi’a parties who had just visited Bush at the White House the month before. The Iraqi government immediately demanded the Iranians’ release. Washington complied.

In January, U.S. troops scooped up another group of Iranians, the so-called “Irbil Five,” described by the Bush administration as members of the Quds Force wing of the IRGC. Tehran rebutted Washington’s accusation that the captured men were intelligence officials trying to wreak havoc in Iraq, stating flatly that Iran is “happy with the Iraqi government.” Once again, the Iraqi government took the side of the Iranians, dispatching Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari to CNN to demand that the men be released and to point out that they were in Iraq at the invitation of the Kurdistan Regional Government. U.S. forces are still detaining the men, reportedly on the advice of Vice President Cheney’s office, which argues that holding them sends a signal to Tehran.

At times, the desire to ratchet up pressure against Iran has led hawkish commentators to make fanciful claims that are swiftly refuted—only to be rewarded for their efforts with higher media profiles. In May 2006, Amir Taheri published an explosive story explaining that Iran’s legislature had passed a law requiring Jews, Zoroastrians, and Christians to wear colored badges, reminiscent of the reprehensible practice in Nazi Germany. The story proved to be entirely false, but Taheri’s utility as a

demonizer of Iran must have impressed the hawkish editors of the *Wall Street Journal's* op-ed page, which has run seven of his pieces since the badge story was debunked.

Perhaps the boldest and most swiftly refuted claim against the Iranians was another sensational story published by Eli Lake, a journalist and opinion writer at the neoconservative *New York Sun*. Lake rose to prominence after seeking former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke's assessment of John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's *London Review of Books* essay, "The Israel Lobby." Duke's endorsement of the paper became a centerpiece of the propaganda campaign to demonize and dismiss Walt and Mearsheimer without addressing their arguments. Lake's subsequent work has focused on painting Iran in the most dangerous light possible, but he overplayed his hand with a July story entitled "Iran Is Found To Be a Lair of Al Qaeda."

ONE THING THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN LEARNED IS TO VIEW EVERY **PIECE OF INNUENDO AND INFERENCE** OFFERED BY THE GOVERNMENT WITH A **HEALTHY SKEPTICISM**.

In that piece, Lake published a claim purportedly leaked to him that the National Intelligence Estimate judged that one of two senior al-Qaeda leadership councils "meets regularly in eastern Iran." Lake reported, "there is little disagreement that a branch of al Qaeda's leadership operates in Iran, [but] the intelligence community diverges on the extent to which the hosting of the senior leaders represents a policy of the regime in Tehran or the rogue actions of Iran's Quds Force, the terrorist support units that report directly to Iran's supreme leader."

Unfortunately for Mr. Lake, the story was tersely refuted by National Intelligence Officer for Transnational Threats Edward Gistaro. Asked at a National

Press Club briefing whether the judgment Lake described was in the final draft report, Gistaro replied, "No, it is not. I don't think it was ever in the draft. ... I read [the *Sun* article] this morning, and I thought, 'I don't know where this comes from.'" The transcript of the conference describes "laughter" in the room after this revelation, but in the fevered minds of those angling for war with Iran, the mission was accomplished. Some 41 percent of Americans still believe Saddam Hussein was behind 9/11. Voters do not always update their beliefs as claims are substantiated or debunked.

It is impossible to discern the motivations of the administration in constructing a public case against Iran. Perhaps the more cynical actors believe that it will frighten Iran into suspending uranium enrichment, the Bush administration's precondition for starting negotiations over the nuclear program. But whatever its intentions, the real risk is

that the administration will talk itself into a corner. Then, if the Iranians do not accede to Washington's precondition for negotiations, and the public becomes convinced that Iran is "at war" with the United States, the obvious question becomes, "What are you going to do about it?" In such a scenario, the administration could find itself in a crisis of credibility, where a lack of decisive action would potentially demonstrate American weakness.

The good news on this front, much as it has not penetrated the Beltway foreign-policy consensus, is that there is little reason to believe that questions of credibility cut so cleanly. In his 2005 book *Calculating Credibility: How*

Leaders Assess Military Threats, Daryl G. Press of Dartmouth University wrote that after "five years of searching for links between backing down and diminished credibility," he was surprised at his own conclusion: "leaders do not doubt the credibility of their enemies simply because they backed down in the past."

Still, given the Beltway belief that backing down diminishes credibility, there is the very real danger that a combination of domestic politics and concern for showing weakness abroad could force a confrontation—even if that outcome is not one Washington is aiming for.

Of course, it is plausible that the Iranians could be causing trouble for American forces in Iraq by directly supplying or organizing Shia militias, much as they have cultivated Hezbollah as a proxy in Lebanon. The question that needs to be asked of those most forcefully pressing the case against Iran is what actual evidence we have that they are killing our troops. If there is one thing that should have been learned in the wake of the Iraq debacle, it is to view every piece of innuendo and inference offered by the government with a healthy skepticism. James Madison was right: "The truth is that all men having power ought to be mistrusted."

After all, we've been here before. Asked about Iranian activity in Iraq, spokeswoman Maj. Alayne Conway conceded that the U.S. military has not captured any agents, but "just because we're not finding them doesn't mean they're not there." She might have been reading from the script Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld used when he warned about Iraq's phantom chemical and biological weapons: an absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. ■

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After Tocqueville

What are the prospects for global democracy when the American model is in such disrepair?

By Chilton Williamson Jr.

FOR NEARLY TWO centuries, historians have debated whether Alexis de Tocqueville, the author of *Democracy in America* (the first volume of which was published in 1835, the second in 1840), had an essentially liberal or conservative view of democratic government. There is no question, on the other hand, that Tocqueville believed—he was explicit about this in his writing—that democracy, whether for good or for ill, represented the social and political future, the end toward which Christendom was striving with, he thought, the blessing of God.

Hugh Brogan, Tocqueville's most recent biographer, argues that the Tocqueville of *Democracy in America* was not the Tocqueville who wrote *The Recollections* or the last, unfinished work, *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*. The youthful enthusiast for democracy came in middle age—he died in 1859, aetat. 54—to regard equality as a threat, not a boon, to civilization. For this loss of faith, Brogan chastises his subject over hundreds of pages.

However that may be, no one—so far as I know—for 200 years has challenged Tocqueville's reputation as a prophet; no one has gainsaid his insight that the future belongs to democracy. Yet the future is by nature an historical concept, racing through its metamorphosis into the past. Presumably, Tocqueville expected the coming democratic age to last for centuries. Still, he was too good an historian, endowed with too fine a

political mind, to have anticipated a concept so ahistorical, so antipolitical, and so palpably silly as the notion of “the end of history”—that moment at which every nation on earth will presumably have attained Western-style democracy—that has shown much appeal for our own time.

So the question is: how long should we take Alexis de Tocqueville's “future” to be? There are signs that, the current rage for “global democracy” to the contrary, the democratic age, though not yet finished, may be drawing to a protracted, uncertain close.

One of these signs is the extent to which America has come to approximate more and more closely what Tocqueville, writing in his most pessimistic vein, foresaw as its possible future condition. Brogan criticizes what he considers Tocqueville's tendency, on occasion, to caricature aspects of democratic life in the United States of which he disapproved—for instance, the alleged regimentation of thought and opinion in the young democracy. What European nation of that era, Brogan demands, could match intellectual freedom as it existed in America in 1831? Yet here is what Tocqueville has to say on the subject in *Democracy*:

[T]he majority has enclosed thought within a formidable fence. A writer is free inside that area, but woe to the man who goes beyond it. Not that he stands in fear of an

auto-da-fé, but he must face all kinds of unpleasantness and everyday persecution. A career in politics is closed to him, for he has offended the only power that holds the keys. He is denied everything, including renown. Before he goes into print, he believes he has supporters; but he feels he has them no more once he stands revealed to all, for those who condemn him express their views loudly, while those who think as he does, but without his courage, retreat into silence as if ashamed of having told the truth.

Brogan insists that passages such as this one should be read as careful attempts on the part of the author to satisfy and mollify elements of the French Right during the July Monarchy. Whether or not that reading is a fair one, and whether Tocqueville's description corresponds truly with freedom of expression in the United States in the early 19th century, it certainly offers a close fit with that at the start of the 21st.

Again: “Princes,” Tocqueville writes, made violence a physical thing, but our democratic republics have turned it into something as intellectual as the human will it is intended to constrain. Under the absolute government of a single man, despotism, to reach the soul, struck clumsily at the body, and the soul,

escaping from such blows, rose gloriously above it; but in democratic republics that is not at all how tyranny behaves; it leaves the body alone and goes straight to the soul.

These are but two of many passages in *Democracy* evincing the author's belief that the greatest threat to democracy is the eventual tyranny of the majority, in the form of enforced opinion and unjust majoritarian laws alike. From the vantage point of our own time, it appears that the great French aristocrat may have been as much a prophet of democracy's corruption and fall as he was of its rise and reign.

Chapter 9, Part II, Volume One of *Democracy in America* is titled "The Main Causes Tending to Maintain A Democratic Republic in the United States." Tocqueville groups them according to three general categories: "the peculiar and accidental situation in which Providence has placed the Americans"; American laws; and American mores and habits. The first includes America's geographic isolation (hence, freedom from proximate enemies), size, and natural bounty: "...[I]t was God who, by handing a limitless continent over to [the Americans], gave them the means of long remaining equal and free." The second pertains to the federal form of government, "which allows the Union to enjoy the power of a great republic and the security of a small one"; communal (that is, secondary) institutions that restrain majoritarian despotism while developing the skills necessary for self-government; and the organization of the nation's judicial power so as to check democratic excess. The third points not only to "the habits of the heart" but what Tocqueville described as "the different notions possessed by men, the various opinions current

among them, and the sum of ideas that shape mental inhabits"; in short, "the whole moral and intellectual state of a people." This is the famous *point de départ* that Josiah Quincy, president of Harvard College, impressed upon Tocqueville during his stay in Massachusetts, thus allowing the French visitor to "see the whole destiny of America contained in the first Puritan who landed on these shores, as that of the whole human race in the first man."

Though Tocqueville considered the geographical situation of the United States of less significance to a democratic future than its laws, and the laws, in turn, less important than its mores, this last category effectively comprises the first two. ("In the United States not legislation alone is democratic, for Nature herself seems to work for the people.") At any rate, it is interesting from the perspective of the 21st century to see what struck Tocqueville as being those American characteristics most likely to perpetuate the Republic.

FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF OUR OWN TIME, IT APPEARS THAT THE GREAT FRENCH ARISTOCRAT MAY HAVE BEEN AS MUCH A PROPHET OF DEMOCRACY'S CORRUPTION AND FALL AS HE WAS OF ITS RISE AND REIGN.

Among these, in order of mention in the text, is the fact that the United States had as yet no great capital city. (In Tocqueville's opinion, "the preponderance of capitals" was a serious threat to representative government that had, indeed, destroyed the republics of antiquity.)

Next is the Americans' religious faith, which Tocqueville considered essential to democratic government. More specifically, "from the start, politics and religion [in America] agreed, and they have not since ceased to do so. ... [O]ne can say that there is not a single religious

doctrine in the United States hostile to democratic and republican institutions"—very much including, he thought, Catholic doctrines. While religion in America did not directly influence the laws and political system, it nevertheless shaped and directed mores and so, by regulating the lives of individual families, helped to regulate the larger family that was society itself. Indeed, Tocqueville considered religion "the first of [the Americans'] political institutions."

Third is the fact of the first American colonists having been the products of a high civilization, arriving "completely civilized" on the shores of North America with "no need to learn, it being enough that they should not forget."

Fourth is that nearly every inhabitant of the Union derived from the same stock, spoke the same language, and prayed to God "in the same fashion."

From all this, Tocqueville concluded, "It is their mores, then, that make the Americans of the United

States ... capable of maintaining the rule of democracy; and it is mores again that make the various Anglo-American democracies more or less orderly or prosperous." Tocqueville did not draw from this conclusion the lesson that democracy could not arise in other countries and flourish there; rather, it was his great hope that France—and every European nation in turn—might find her way to a variant of American democracy that would best suit her national character, her position in the world, and her aspirations. Tocqueville spoke only of American

democracy, and those of its endowments that appeared to him as necessary to its survival as a great and successful human experiment and example for the world. ("Why," he mused, 30 years before the Civil War broke out, "in the conduct of [American] public affairs, is there something so disorderly, passionate, and, one might almost say, feverish, by no means presaging a long future?")

No modern reader considering Tocqueville's "main causes tending to maintain a democratic Republic in the United States" can fail to be struck by the fact that not one of them can be said to persist today. (The Religious Right, which of course is very much a minority group, is unable to prevail against the unofficial paganism of the federal government and of the dominant culture in America.)

What is one to make of this? Of course, circumstances change radically over two centuries so that what was a factor promotive of democratic institutions in 1831 might not necessarily be so in 2007. (Tocqueville's approbatory mention of the absence of capital cities in America, daft as it may seem to modern ears, is essentially an expression of this French politician's fear of political centralization in Paris, which he traced from the French Revolution, through the Napoleonic Empire, and down to the reign of Charles X. Even so, Tocqueville would surely have been appalled by the monopolization of power, opinion, and culture by Washington, New York, and Los Angeles as it has existed since the early 20th century.)

Furthermore, there is the possibility that Tocqueville could simply have been wrong about these things. (I am uncertain, for example, whether he really understood the American judicial system he so admired.) As brilliantly perceptive as he was as a writer, thinker, and prophet, his work is characterized

by vast and often unsupported generalizations that seem often more like inspired impression and philosophical elaboration than the political "science" he helped to pioneer.

The fact remains, nevertheless, that American conservatives and liberals alike have been complaining for generations now that the American Republic is a republic no longer and that the American federal democratic system

for "global democracy" that envisions the convergence of the two in the "end of history." To the realization of this grandiose ambition, the maintenance of at least some semblance of a coherent public culture and active democratic institutions in America is crucial. The United States has been democracy's impassioned international champion since 1917, through two world wars, a cold war, and

THE **FUTURE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY** IS AN ISSUE THAT EXTENDS AROUND THE WORLD. THIS IS BECAUSE **THE DREAM OF A SECOND "AMERICAN CENTURY"** IS IMPLICIT IN A BIPARTISAN ENTHUSIASM FOR **"GLOBAL DEMOCRACY"** THAT ENVISIONS THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWO IN THE **"END OF HISTORY."**

has been wrecked by political centralization, the imperial presidency, judicial tyranny, the erosion of civil liberties, corruption in government, interest-group politics, the power of money in winning elections; and American society by the decline of religious belief, the decay of morals, cultural illiteracy and incoherency, public indifference to serious issues of public concern, the decline in educational standards, and so forth. Meanwhile, we have succeeded in destroying much of our beautiful God-given continent and in making enemies of peoples overseas whom the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans no longer keep at arm's length. For all these reasons, it seems that the failure of the features of American democracy in Tocqueville's time to match with those of the present age may be a thing that bears thinking about.

The future of American democracy is an issue that, far from stopping at American shores, in truth extends around the world. This is because the dream of a second "American Century" is implicit in a bipartisan enthusiasm

beyond, as well as its shining example as almost a millennial city upon a hill. Following World War II, it was Washington, bound and determined to destroy the European imperial system and the British Empire in particular, that insisted on a program of decolonization in the Third World and the establishment of native "democracies" to replace the former colonial governments. Also, since the end of the 19th century, the U.S. has proved itself increasingly inclined to act as the world's bully-boy on behalf of democracy, ready and even eager to impose "democratic" governments by force of arms when diplomatic threats and economic enticements alike fail.

And fail they usually do, for the reason that democracy is not particularly appealing—if appealing at all—to most non-Western societies. Tocqueville made clear that he expected the progressive democratization of "Christendom," not of the world; he has only the harshest things to say, for instance, about the South American countries, which, he stated flatly,

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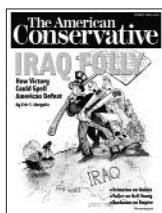
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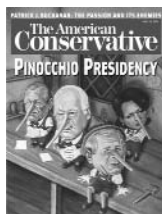


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"cannot maintain a democracy." Outside the boundaries of the Western world, few nations want democracy; they simply want what democracy has to offer beyond its (to them) inconvenient, restrictive, and encumbering political system. They are willing, many of them, to humor the United States into attempting the formalities of democratic government, which they understand to be a precondition of foreign aid, favored trade status, and other benefits that credulous politicians in Washington are willing to confer upon these ostensible converts to democratism. But that, really, is as far as they are willing to go. Meanwhile, as one after another of these pseudo-democracies—Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Russia—lapses into either despotism or chaos, one American administration after another trumpets all the more loudly the glories of democratic society, while readying its Lubyanka-like array of coercive instruments, just in case...

A recent article by Patricia Cohen in the *New York Times* questioned the long-standing assumption that democracy and capitalism each are requisite to the survival of the other. In China, Russia, and Venezuela, to name but three examples, explosive economic growth has been occurring in the context of unfree, or frankly Communist, societies.

As Michael Mandelbaum, author of a recent book about democracy—"the world's most popular form of government" he strangely calls it—acknowledges, the "great hope" of the early 1990s, namely that increasing incomes would create a strong middle class insistent on wresting personal freedom and political power from its respective governments worldwide, has not been justified.

"People, including myself, still have reason to think it will eventually

happen," Francis Fukuyama insists, speaking to the case of China. "But the time frame has to be a lot longer."

On the other hand, Bruce R. Scott, a Harvard economist, notes, "Capitalism came before democracy essentially everywhere, except in this country, where they started at the same time." (That is truly an observation in the mode and spirit of Tocqueville—who indeed made it in *Democracy*.)

And Fukuyama himself goes on to speculate about the creation of a "new type of authoritarianism" based on "Asian values" that might lead both China and Russia along an alternate path to economic development.

Meanwhile, a parallel development is proceeding in the United States, as the presence here of tens of millions of Meso-Americans and the possibility of scores more arriving over the next couple of decades threaten the replacement of Anglo-European values by Latin-American ones.

Less than 200 years after the publication of *Democracy in America*, there are signs that the Democratic Age heralded by Alexis de Tocqueville may indeed be drawing to an end. The fish rots from the head, as they say. And the salt that has lost its savor is good for nothing. If democracy in America were to become a mere spectacle of smoke and mirrors, a hollow fraud, then the future of democracy abroad would likely be doomed, in the Western world and beyond it. In that event, the devolution of democracy will loom as large in the history of the human race as the evolution that Tocqueville attempted to describe, a story worthy of a writer of genius equal to his own. ■

Chilton Williamson Jr. is Senior Editor for Books at Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture and the author of The Conservative Bookshelf.

Are Borders Un-Christian?

Mike Huckabee's surprise second-place showing at the Ames straw poll has catapulted him into contention with the leading candidates in Iowa. This was all the

more remarkable given the former governor's record of "compassionate conservative" sympathies for government activism and liberal immigration policy. Since his presidential campaign began, Huckabee has been careful to mask his views on immigration, including support for recent "comprehensive reform," with an emphasis on border enforcement and security. Yet only two years ago, as governor, he denounced a bill in the Arkansas legislature that would have prohibited state benefits for illegal immigrants as "un-Christian" and "un-American."

A former Baptist pastor, Huckabee sermonized against the bill's supporters: "I don't understand how a practicing Christian can turn his back on a child from this or any other state." Like his fellow presidential candidate, Sen. Sam Brownback, Huckabee regards it as his Christian duty to help subvert and liberalize U.S. immigration laws. Together, they embrace the notion that fidelity to the Gospel requires privileging the interests of non-citizens over those of fellow citizens.

Michael Gerson, the well-known former White House speechwriter, has described President Bush's own agenda with many of the same Christian references that Brownback and Huckabee use. Gerson has claimed that President Bush "set out policies—a federal role in improving education, humane immigration reform, Medicare prescription drug coverage—that borrowed more from Roman Catholic social thought than from Friedrich Hayek."

There is certainly no trace of Hayek anywhere to be found, but of Catholic

social thought there has been even less evidence. Where the latter calls for respecting subsidiarity, compassionate conservatism offers centralization, and where the Church calls for equitable treatment of labor, "compassion" dictates importing labor and depressing American wages. Above all, this allegedly Christian conservatism has focused "solidarity with the poor" primarily on those who have entered the country illegally.

Behind this notion is the assumption that Christianity, as a "universal" and supranational religion that preaches charity, obliges the faithful to set aside all considerations of national loyalty and permanently welcome the stranger and the foreigner—no matter how they have come to be here. Hijacking admirable Biblical exhortations to hospitality to travelers, these pro-immigration Christians have turned them into mandates either to subsidize the resettlement of whole populations or to facilitate the exploitation of poor laborers through guest-worker programs. This same view takes for granted that Christianity must logically lead to support for political transnationalism, embracing the policies of globalization and open borders.

This distorted understanding of the obligations of religious charity confuses Christianity with an abstract universalistic ethic that effaces particular loyalties to one's place, neighbors, and community. Reviewing Robert Spencer's *A Religion of Peace?: Why Christianity Is and Islam Isn't*, John Derbyshire charged that "a great enabler of globalization has been the Christian tradition"

—after labeling globalization the most destructive ideology and, by extension, tarring Christianity as the source of this dangerous idea. For Derbyshire, as for Huckabee and Brownback, Christian charity and fraternity recognize no distinctions of affinity or hierarchy of relationships, but this only shows how detached from a correct understanding of the Christian tradition both the purveyors of political compassion and their secular critics are.

In Christian social thought, there are obligations between kin and between fellow citizens that take priority on account of the natural affinities and associations that they share, and it is contrary to Christian charity to neglect these obligations, whether for the sake of "compassion" or out of a desire for convenience and profit. Within any polity, fellow citizens have more obligations to one another than they have to non-citizens. Robert Spencer cited Aquinas in his reply to Derbyshire: "after his duties towards God, man owes most to his parents and his country," and in connection with these obligations come obligations to relatives and compatriots. Aquinas says elsewhere, "Wherefore in matters pertaining to nature we should love our kindred most, in matters concerning relations between citizens, we should prefer our fellow-citizens..." (*Summa Theologica* 2.2.26)

This idea is not limited to Thomists or Catholics alone, but belongs to the Christian tradition as a whole. Indeed, St. Paul argues in I Timothy 5:8: "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

Despite what some pro-immigration Christian politicians may think, the imperatives in Emma Lazarus's "New Colossus" are not Dominical commands. ■

Arts & Letters

FILM

[In the Valley of Elah]

In the Shadow of the Valley

By Steve Sailer

THOUGH IT IS OFTEN ACCUSED of imposing a political agenda on the public, Hollywood isn't organized to churn out topical movies quickly. Thus, only now, 54 months after the invasion of Iraq, is a major feature film about the war's impact premiering.

"In the Valley of Elah" is a modest-budget drama laden with luminaries. Oscar-magnet screenwriter Paul Haggis ("Crash" and "Million Dollar Baby") directs fellow Academy Award winners Tommy Lee Jones, Charlize Theron, and Susan Sarandon in a spare, somber, and moving police procedural.

"Elah" is based on the notorious 2003 murder of Spc. Richard Davis by his fellow soldiers shortly after their unit arrived stateside from combat in Iraq. At some point after a drunken brawl outside a strip club, Davis was stabbed 32 times. His comrades-in-arms then dismembered his body, burnt it, and hid his remains in the woods.

Working from Mark Boal's *Playboy* article, Haggis wrote the central role of the victim's father, a laconic retired Army sergeant and former military policeman in Vietnam, for his mentor Clint Eastwood, but the 77-year-old told him he had retired from acting. So

Haggis turned to 61-year-old Tommy Lee Jones, who, as his formidable performance in "Elah" demonstrates, is still very much in his prime.

In this fictionalized retelling, Jones receives a phone call from the Army that his son has gone AWOL. He immediately drives to the base to search for him, bringing his decades of experience finding soldiers on benders. Yet neither the MPs nor the local cops are much interested in this routine disappearance, and they resent the father's imposing martial presence—his pants as sharply creased as his face—as a taciturn rebuke to their bureaucratic apathy.

When a hacked-up body is found in the brush, however, Theron, a city detective promoted from meter maid because (as her chauvinist colleagues repeatedly remind her) she'd been sleeping with the boss, admits that the old soldier is the superior sleuth and forms a wary alliance with him. In a touching scene, Jones tells the single mother's young son a bedtime story of how the boy David fought the giant Goliath in the Valley of Elah.

As a director, Haggis's strength is that he's not intimidated by his screenwriter's fame. Haggis edited out an hour of his own dialogue, making "Elah" far quieter than the brilliant but showy "Crash." Here, Haggis lets his superb cast carry the film through long silent takes.

For example, the morning after the corpse is sent to the coroner for identification, Jones is awakened by a knock on his motel room door. Outside is a soldier in full-dress uniform. Having worn this same uniform to deliver the same message to other parents, the despairing father knows what's coming. For 15 seconds he struggles to prepare himself to receive the blow in the only way he

knows, willing his tired body to stand at rigid military attention.

In a brief role, Sarandon might be even better than Jones. Having lost her older son to a helicopter crash in training, she asks her husband, "Couldn't you have left me just one?" When he protests that he didn't tell their boy to enlist, she responds that their son couldn't have grown up in their home without feeling that he'd never be a man until he served. Jones has no answer.

While murders in most movies are the result of cunning conspiracies that can be satisfyingly unraveled, real-life killings like this one frequently transpire among drunk or drugged-up young men for motives that remain hazy—Davis's killer refused to testify—and might well turn out to be just plain stupid.

Into this vacuum, Haggis boldly ventures, theorizing that the soldiers were suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder caused by guilt over their abuse of Iraqi civilians—war crimes that are inevitable due to the very nature of urban counter-insurgency warfare.

Perhaps, but Haggis isn't a strong enough visual director to make the flashbacks to Iraq sufficiently nightmarish. And do veterans really murder each other more than other young men kill their companions? Or is the Davis killing semi-famous because it was the kind of atypical man-bites-dog story that the press loves?

Movies like "Elah" that are ripped from the headlines give the screenwriter too much of an excuse to leave in implausible events because, hey, it's a true story, so it's not my fault if it seems unrealistic. ■

Rated R for violent and disturbing content, language, and some sexuality/nudity.

BOOKS

[*Cheney: The Untold Story of America's Most Powerful and Controversial Vice President*, Stephen F. Hayes, HarperCollins, 592 pages]

A Valentine for the Veep

By Gary Brecher

THEY SAY the Byzantines were debating what sex angels were while the Turks' cannon were destroying the walls of Constantinople. So I guess we shouldn't be surprised that Stephen Hayes, a clean-cut lad who looks like he ought to be named Chad, has just rushed out this 500-page bio gushing over every stage of Dick Cheney's life. You might think Hayes was doing a postmortem to show where Cheney went wrong, but *au contraire*. Hayes's whole effort aims to prove that Iraq wasn't Cheney fault—and besides, the war was a good idea! It's going great!

That's the kind of logic you get from Hayes—and that's the good part. Before the 200 pages on Iraq, you have to plow through 300 pages about the childhood, college career (if you could call it that), and home life of Richard Cheney. Let me summarize this part in half a sentence: dullest guy in the world.

Reading this book recalls what veterans say about war: hours of boredom interrupted by a few minutes of terror. Three hundred pages of tedium interrupted by 200 pages of passing the buck—or rather, the dinar.

This book is written strictly for the 15 percent of America that still loves Dick Cheney. They'll swallow any nonsense because admitting that he was wrong about Iraq means acknowledging they were wrong, too, and these conceited jerks would sooner see America humiliated and bankrupt. But if you're not part

of the neocon cult, you'll have a hard time getting through. I barely made it out of the chapters covering Cheney's boyhood.

Only an intelligence agency could come up with a backstory this boring. The only interesting thing anybody in his family ever did was when his mom played women's softball back in the 1930s, before it was considered normal for women. (So I guess it is genetic after all, or am I not allowed to say that?) Anyway, the rest of the family has the kind of history you'd forget in a second—just long lists of folks with three two-syllable names.

Then came the great day when Thomas Herbert Cheney married Margaret Ellen Tyler. You can tell she was a natural to join the family because she had three names with the proper number of syllables. And their union was blessed with Richard Bruce (!) Cheney.

Poor Stephen Hayes. He's forced to strain all of his journalistic muscles built from years of practice at *The Weekly Standard* to make Cheney's boyhood sound interesting. He writes like he trained at *Pravda*, meaning he spends most of his time licking Cheney's boots like a commie hack doing a bio of Kim Il Sung.

For example, Cheney had a paper route. So did I. But listen to the way Hayes tells it: "Cheney started working early, at the age of nine, mowing lawns and delivering the *Lincoln Journal Star*. Each day, Cheney would get a bundle of papers delivered to his house. He sorted them, folded them, and wrapped them with a rubber band. Then he grouped them in a bag, draped it over his bicycle handlebars, and pedaled throughout College View firing newsprint missiles at front porches."

Wow! I didn't know having a paper route counted as military experience. And to think that little Dick not only fired those newsprint missiles at unsuspecting front porches but "sorted them, folded them, and"—let's not forget—"wrapped them with a rubber band." Straight out of Horatio Alger! Talk about seeds of greatness!

The sad truth is that up until he landed us in Iraq, Cheney was just plain dull—so dull that hardworking Hayes

jumped on that paper-route bit like it was biographical gold. And he was right. Compared to most details of Cheney's early life, this was high drama.

Young Dick went to a tech-nerd summer camp called "The Cherubs Program" and enjoyed driving drunk, accumulating two DUI convictions to add to what Hayes calls "his already impressive résumé." In truth, the only impressive thing on Cheney's résumé was that he got into Yale, even though he did it because a big donor liked him and called up the admissions office. Once there, he flunked out. Twice. Or, to quote Hayes, Cheney suffered from "poor academic performance." Yeah. The kind where they cancel your scholarship and tell you to get the hell out. Then let you back in next year. Then flunk you out again.

This is awkward for the poor biographer, who wants to make Cheney out to be the deep thinker of the DUI Duo, aka the Bush administration. And the way Hayes goes about explaining why Cheney bombed so bad at Yale is like a shorter version of his story about why Cheney bombed so bad, so to speak, in Iraq. Both times, the answer is simple: everybody else is to blame.

In the Yale case, it was the university's fault. Hayes calls this chapter "To Yale and Back," which I guess is one way of looking at it. Cheney, you see, was just too pure for those Ivy League elitists: "When Dick Cheney arrived at Yale he brought the West with him." Yeah, I can just see those limp-wristed Yalies now:

"I say, old boy, where did those dreadful buffalo herds come from?"

"Oh, that dreary freshman Cheney dragged them along with him. What a bore!"

Even the freshman football coach at Yale was a durn egghead: he published a book called *Fundamental Football*, which Hayes calls "an indication that the academic maxim 'publish or perish' may have extended from the classroom to the stadium."

Well, by gosh, all that intellectualism was too much for Mr. Wild West. He and his buddies just wanted to drink beer, watch "Maverick" on TV, and engage in

what Hayes calls “tomfoolery.” Now there’s a word you don’t hear everyday. In Hayes’s special neocon code, it means Cheney went to Yale, didn’t learn a damn thing, got drunk all the time, and couldn’t resist in what Hayes keeps calling “pranks.”

He could have learned any foreign language in the world and actually known something about, say, Iraq, before he decided it was ripe for democracy. He could have sat in the same room with the best teachers in the world. He could have hung out at the library. But no, he was into “tomfoolery.” Har-dee-har-har, and excuse me if I don’t think it’s as heart-warming as Hayes does.

I guess the biographer expects the stories about Cheney’s “pranks” to humanize him. If that’s the idea, it doesn’t work. Cheney’s not exactly the life of any party, and it doesn’t help that Hayes includes a picture of him on a scooter, in shorts and shades, looking exactly like the evil preppy frat boys in “Animal House.”

The real giveaway of the book is its priorities: all the room in the world for “tomfoolery” at Yale, but guess how many pages for Cheney’s work on the first Iraq War, America’s only strategic victory since 1945: You might think that a patriot like Hayes would be happy to show how well Cheney did back in the days of Bush Senior. But you’d be wrong. Hayes covers Gulf War One in two ultra-fast paragraphs. He concludes, “There was only one problem: Saddam Hussein remained in power.”

Of course Hayes thinks that was a terrible thing; it meant we just had to go in and occupy the whole godforsaken country in 2003. Funny thing, though: he quotes a certain official from Bush Senior’s administration explaining exactly why we didn’t do that, and why it would be a disaster if we did. It’s such a clear-headed, brilliant summary of why not to occupy Iraq that it’s hard to believe it came out of the mouth of Dick Cheney himself:

The question that is usually asked is why didn’t we go on to Baghdad and get rid of [Saddam]? ... We

made that decision not to go on to Baghdad because ...we’d liberated Kuwait and destroyed most of his offensive capability—his capacity to threaten his neighbors. ... If we’d gone on to Baghdad ... we would have moved from fighting in a desert environment, where you had clear areas where you knew who everybody was ... there was no intermingling of any significant civilian population. If you go into Baghdad, that changes dramatically ... you’re fighting in a major built-up city, a lot of civilians are around, significant limitations on our ability to use our most effective technologies and techniques. ... You know, then you have accepted the responsibility for governing Iraq. Now, what kind of government are you going to establish? Is it going to be a Kurdish government, a Shia government, or a Sunni government...? And the final point ... I don’t think you could have done all that without significant additional US casualties. ... And the question in my mind is how many additional American casualties is Saddam worth? And the answer is not very damn many. So I think we got it right ...

Damn right we did, Mr. Cheney.

That little quote, coming right in the middle of this book, was as decisive as Hiroshima for me. That was the voice of Dick Cheney back when he was the solid, rational SecDef. You can see why Dick Armitage said, ten years later, that he couldn’t recognize the old Dick Cheney in Bush Junior’s veep.

The rest of the book is all downhill. Like Cheney said himself, we got it right the first time. All that was left was to get it wrong the second time around. That’s when the book goes from dull to insane.

Hayes tries to blame everybody but Cheney for the decision to invade while pretending it’s all going to work out. If you read the White House’s statements on Iraq, you know that tune. And it’s just as lame in the pages of this book. Hayes quotes Cheney even trying to blame the

Army, despite the fact that the military did a brilliant job of conquering Iraq and had plans for the occupation that Cheney and the other neocon geniuses tossed in the trash basket.

Of course Hayes is convinced Saddam was “linked” to 9/11, and that justifies the invasion. Hayes even had a bestseller, *The Connection*, aiming to prove Saddam was behind the WTC attacks. I love that word, “links.” Doesn’t prove a thing, but it sounds great.

The fact is that Saddam tried to activate his “terror networks” all through the first Gulf War, with broadcasts in lame code ordering his imaginary loyalists to strike all over the West to avenge the humiliation of the Iraqi army. Remember what happened? Not a thing. Saddam was an old-school dictator, running a family operation that had no loyalists south of Tikrit. He ruled the rest of the country through pure fear. He could have been king in Iraq 3,000 years ago because the same skill counted then that counts now: the knack for sniffing out conspiracies and making a gory example of plotters. Stalin had it too; the only difference is that he actually did have loyalists all over the world.

Even if—and this is a huge, crazy if—Saddam was somehow linked to 9/11, occupying Iraq would still have been a totally disastrous idea—for all the reasons Dick Cheney laid out way back in 1992. But Cheney’s reaction to the catastrophe has been pure denial so crude that it can’t be papered over. Remember his claim that the insurgency was in its “last throes”? Then there’s his downright psychotic take on those missing WMD: “I think they will be found.” Yeah, around the time Jimmy Hoffa strolls home.

Tough job for a biographer, sprucing up material like that. So what does Hayes do? Again, the old *Pravda* trick: censorship. Abu Ghraib gets part of one sentence, on page 480. But leaving out unpleasant facts won’t do the job on its own, so he does what any Bushie would do: he slimes everybody who ever dared to say that the invasion might not have been a good idea. And he doesn’t even

do it well. Karl Rove would be disgusted by Hayes's amateur-night smear techniques.

One of the funniest examples is the case of David Addington, Cheney's former chief of staff. As long as Addington is pro-Cheney and pro-war, Hayes flatters him all over the place: "Cheney trusted Addington more than anyone else other than his own immediate family." They watch fireworks together, hang out with Cheney's daughters together. They're inseparable.

Then Addington crosses Cheney and his *consigliere* Scooter Libby by giving "statements contradicting Libby's claims about how and when he learned the identity of Valerie Plame." And oh boy, does Hayes change his tune!

First, he alters history. Before, he said Addington was closer to Cheney than anybody but his family. Now, it's Scooter who's the friend—his "relationship with Cheney ... friendlier and less formal" than Addington's. Unlike cuddly li'l Scooter, Addington "struck even those who respected him as aloof and ... needlessly acerbic."

They say you need a good memory to be a good liar. If you're a biographer, you also need a good proofreader to make sure you don't change your characterization of one of the central characters in the story on page 478, which is when Hayes starts painting Addington as Dr. Evil.

It's no use, of course. This is Cheney's War and always will be. The English fought something called the "War of Jenkins' Ear"; this one might end up being known as "Cheney's Throes." It's as if his whole life—from that embarrassing blurt that he had "other priorities" during the Vietnam War to his "Saturday Night Live" routines about imaginary WMD—was a set-up for this horrible punchline, and the other 300 million of us are just along for the ride, screaming at the top of our lungs while Cheney and Stephen Hayes tell us everything's fine. ■

Gary Brecher writes the War Nerd column for The eXile, a Moscow-based weekly newspaper.

[*World War IV: The Long Struggle Against Islamofascism*, Norman Podhoretz, Doubleday, 240 pages]

In Search of Forever War

By Scott McConnell

THE PUBLICATION of Norman Podhoretz's *World War IV: The Long Struggle Against Islamofascism* provides one answer to the question of whether neoconservatives are experiencing doubts or second thoughts about the militarized foreign policies they have advocated. The answer given by the venerable former editor of *Commentary* and now foreign-policy adviser to Republican frontrunner Rudy Giuliani, in a word, is "no."

The book is a polemic made up largely of essays that have appeared over the past five years in *Commentary* and circulated on the Internet. Podhoretz readers are likely to find little with which they are not familiar.

That need not be fatal. Podhoretz has published some vignettes from his long life among New York intellectuals again and again. Many readers will take pleasure, as I did, encountering for the umpteenth time Marion Magid's quip about the few dozen down-at-the-heels leftists attending a 1960 union-hall debate about American foreign policy. Every one of these young people was "a tragedy to some family or other." Yet the point was how quickly things could turn around. Within a handful of years, their oppositional attitudes would infuse a resurgent New Left and nearly upend the American establishment.

But *World War IV* provides few such moments. Those hoping for Podhoretz near his best, a writer capable of wonderfully subtle distinctions and penetrating dissections of other thinkers, will be disappointed. Those content with a somewhat more sophisticated version of Sean Hannity-style tub-thumping about "Islamofascism" will be well satisfied.

World War IV is written to shore up what Podhoretz calls the "Bush Doctrine," to revive waning enthusiasm for the war in Iraq and for new wars Podhoretz wants Washington to initiate—especially a campaign against Iran. He seeks to infuse Bush's foreign policy with a spirit of world historical mission, while regretting that the White House and its backers have not done the job themselves. He wants Bush to adopt the name World War IV to encourage Americans to see Iraq as an episode in a grander struggle, as epochal as the battle against the Axis powers in World War II and the Communists in the Cold War (which Podhoretz dubs World War III). The enemy in this case is not Iraqi insurgents, or even al-Qaeda, but Islamofascism.

It is worth noting that this term, unlike "Communist" or "Nazi" or "Fascist," is not one the adversary has chosen for himself. It is instead of fairly recent invention and is now deployed as a propaganda tool to persuade Americans that all of their various Muslim foes—be they real, latent, violent, non-violent, or even fanciful—are pretty much alike. Thus Palestinian nationalists, Sunni Islamist terrorists, Shi'ite radicals, Ba'athist insurgents, and most especially the government of Iran are to be considered part of the same "two-headed monster." Defining the adversary is a way to guarantee, in Michael Vlahos's apt phrase, a "Forever War" that will continue as long as there are regimes to be labeled "fascist," Muslims who resist American military presence in their lands, and, of course, people who oppose Israel for any reason. Islamofascists, claims Podhoretz, "like the Nazis and the Communists before them ... are dedicated to the destruction of the freedoms we cherish and for which America stands." Perhaps aware that this claim would come as news to anyone with professional or passing firsthand knowledge of the Arab world, Podhoretz brandishes a torrent of quotations from people with Muslim names. See, he says, citing a sentence from some Palestinian cleric who rails against America, Israel has nothing to do with their hatred!

With a keen marketer's insight, Podhoretz supposes the battle for American public opinion is more than half won if things can be named correctly. So after "World War IV" and "Islamofascism," Podhoretz constitutes (with more fanfare than the White House ever assembled) a "Bush Doctrine" from the speeches the president has made and is so enamored of a passage delivered nine days after 9/11—"I have seen their kind before ... heirs of the murderous ideologies of the 20th century"—that he quotes it twice. This oblique reference to fascism, reportedly added at the last minute at State Department insistence to avoid giving offense to Vladimir Putin, proves a godsend to those who want to convince us we are at war with the successors to Nazi Germany.

By defining a Bush Doctrine to his liking, Podhoretz seeks to put Bush in a bottle, to make sure that the most hawkish phrases in his speeches can never be forgotten, to guarantee there is no change of course. But he is also skating around a subject of some debate in neo-conservative circles: whether George W. Bush can be relied upon to pursue the wars to the extent the faction desires. Podhoretz, citing the limits on any politician, and recalling his own dismay at Ronald Reagan's seeming shrinking from confrontation with Moscow, remains a Bush stalwart. So he mocks the now commonplace perception of the Bush Doctrine as "the voice of the neoconservative ventriloquists who were using [Bush] as their dummy," saying it was unreasonable to suppose that underlings could convince "strong-minded" people like Bush and Cheney and Rumsfeld to do their bidding. But this argument can't help but bring to mind a comment of David Frum, who actually worked as a White House speechwriter during the post-9/11 period. After his tenure, Frum said, "I always believed, as a speechwriter, that if you could persuade the president to commit himself to certain words, he would feel committed to the ideas that underlay those words. And the big shock to me has been that although the president said the words, he just did not absorb the ideas."

If Frum does not go so far as to endorse the "Bush as dummy of the neocon ventriloquists" argument, he does call into question, in a way Podhoretz does not, whether Bush fully understood the implications of what he was saying in those speeches. All the more reason then for Podhoretz to elevate hurriedly pulled-together strands of presidential rhetoric into an immutable "doctrine."

Podhoretz's depictions of the Iraq War have a Hail-to-the-Great-Five-Year-Plan-Harvest quality to them, as if writing this book required that he refrain from reading any newspapers: "Iraq had been liberated from one of the worst tyrants of the Middle East; a decent constitution had been written; three elections have been held; a government was in place; and previously unimaginable liberties were being enjoyed." One wonders, can he really be that ignorant of the accounts of the Iraqi middle class in exile in Jordan and Syria, reduced to penury, making the invasion of Iraq the cause of one of the most dramatic migrations of educated people in our lifetime, one as vast and tragic as the boat people exodus from Vietnam?

Much of *World War IV* is a survey of American elite debate, which Podhoretz places in the context of his own biography. As the editor of *Commentary*, he witnessed the shift from the Cold War liberal consensus of the 1950s and early 1960s to the radicalism of the late 1960s, which in turn gave rise to neoconservatism in the 1970s. He welcomed the prodromal stirrings of this radicalism in the early 1960s, then recoiled against it as it expanded through the polity and has since been on constant guard against its recurrence. Now he fears it may be happening all over again, professing shock at the speed with which intellectual opposition to the Iraq War gathered steam, noting it is broader now than the Vietnam-era antiwar coalition ever was.

He spends some time parsing the intellectual factions that have turned against the war: realists, paleoconservatives, liberal internationalists, and finally long-established mandarins of the Right like George Will and William F. Buckley. But his efforts to explain and pick apart

their arguments are weak and *pro forma*, as if he hardly had patience to understand or even read them. Podhoretz in the 1960s and '70s had known personally many of those whose ideas he would combat; it was generally a strength of the neoconservatives that they knew, in an intimate and sometimes even familial sense, whom and what they were against. That world of clashing opinions, so vibrantly conveyed in earlier Podhoretz works like *Breaking Ranks* and *Ex-Friends*, is absent from *World War IV*. Podhoretz writes as if he hadn't had an actual conversation with a foreign-policy realist in years, much less with a paleoconservative. His depictions of them—sprinkled with sneer words about "hating America"—never rise above the one-dimensional, and are often mere caricatures. By the book's end, he hasn't answered why Americans have turned against the war in Iraq more quickly than the one in Vietnam—probably because the most simple explanation, that it is alien to the American experience to invade a country in order to turn a region democratic, is too difficult to refute.

An anecdote of my own suggests the source of Podhoretz's problem. I had known him since the mid-1980s and admired him for a decade before that. We had been friendly, if not close, for a dozen years. Five or six years ago, a hostess sat us near one another at a dinner. As I approached to shake hands, he appeared uncomfortable, saying, finally, "I always liked you, Scott, but you wrote something that was anti-Israel, and on that subject I'm very ideological." There was to be, he made clear, no talk between us at the dinner.

World War IV reads as if there have been many such cut-offs, often inspired by disagreements about Israel—I had written critically of the West Bank settlements and roadblocks—but perhaps other matters as well. The Norman Podhoretz who once engaged forcefully and even joyously a wide spectrum of political-intellectual opinions exists no more. Those who have read his earlier books will recognize the loss. ■

[*Until Proven Innocent: Political Correctness and the Shameful Injustices of the Duke Lacrosse Case*, Stuart Taylor Jr. and KC Johnson, Thomas Dunne Books, 420 pages]

The School for Scandal

By Richard B. Spencer

IN THEIR NEW BOOK on the Duke lacrosse fiasco, Stuart Taylor Jr. and KC Johnson recount an episode that almost perfectly encapsulates the atmosphere in Durham after three lacrosse players had been accused of gang-raping a black stripper, Crystal Mangum, on the night of March 13, 2006. A few weeks after the incident, professor Reeve Huston opened his class on labor history announcing that he could remain silent no longer and must express his outrage towards the lacrosse players—five of whom were enrolled in his class. Huston professed that the alleged rape—which he was positive had taken place—was part of a long history of “alpha males assaulting black women.” The self-described “Gramscian, Foucaultian feminist” asserted there is no doubt “an ejaculation had occurred.” (In reality, no player ever touched Mangum except when helping her into her car.)

As Huston’s students collectively cringed, one lacrosse player in the class, Jay Jennison, was moved to draw a cartoon rendering of the impassioned oration. Months later, when Detective Benjamin Himan of the Durham police was illegally searching Jennison’s dorm room (standard procedure in D-town), Himan discovered the cartoon and exclaimed as many a TV detective has exclaimed before—“Bingo!” It seems that in the Bizarro World Durham had become, a cartoon rendering of a professor making a ridiculous claim could be considered “evidence.”

The Duke lacrosse case was a deadly serious matter, for it involved three man-

ifestly innocent young men—Dave Evans, Reade Seligmann, and Collin Finnerty—put into legal jeopardy. But there was always a hint of farce about the affair. Mike Nifong was not just a prosecutorial thug but a self-dramatizing prima donna. His allies among the Durham police were knaves and incompetent buffoons. The so-called “Group of 88”—the faculty members who signed a full-page manifesto in Duke’s student paper decrying the “social disaster”—made pronouncements of high melodrama and convoluted. The Duke Lacrosse Case may yet become a TV-movie, but it would make a better *opera buffa*.

Until that version is composed, we’ll have to make due with Taylor and Johnson’s *Until Proven Innocent: Political Correctness and the Shameful Injustices of the Duke Lacrosse Case*. It is no mere scandal-driven instabook but a thoroughgoing narrative interwoven with broader reflections on America’s legal and educational institutions. The authors are well prepared to write such a history. Taylor, a Harvard Law graduate, is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and, as a journalist, covered the Supreme Court for the *New York Times*. (Thankfully, he pulls no punches in criticizing the distorted coverage of his former employer.) Johnson, a Harvard Ph.D., is a diplomatic and political historian at Brooklyn College. Since April 2006, Johnson has maintained the blog “Durham-in-Wonderland”—the aptest of titles—in which he has examined just about every aspect of the affair.

The lacrosse players, as well as their families and counsel, made the authors privy to details of their interactions with the police, the prosecutor, and the Duke administration that until now were unknown. As someone who followed the scandal closely, I found a new revelation on almost every page.

While many still claim “we may never know what really happened on March 13,” we actually know a great deal. In fact, Taylor and Johnson have compiled an almost minute-by-minute account of that fateful night. Time-stamped photos taken at the party reveal around a six-minute

window in which any attack could possibly have taken place. In this line, Evans, Finnerty, and Seligmann were three of the worst suspects for Mangum to have chosen, as digital records of their using an ATM, making cellphone calls, paying a cabbie, and swiping into their dorms are unimpeachable. It is particularly painful that Seligmann was identified as he had purposefully left the party early, sensing that hiring these strippers would lead to trouble.

While the facts speak for themselves, in the minds of Mangum, Nifong, and many others, the alleged rape became a bizarre, rather mutable fantasy. Mangum first described the scene as a bachelor party and claimed that one player muttered “I’m getting married tomorrow” while raping her. Mangum then strangely claimed that fellow stripper Kim Roberts was the players’ accomplice and helped drag her into the bathroom to be assaulted. From the very beginning, it should have been obvious to the Durham police that the accuser’s tale was dubious at best. And yet whether out of resentment of Duke (quite common among the force) or a desire to “just win,” the upholders of law and order pursued a conviction unrelentingly and, in numerous instances, unethically.

As the lies stacked up, Nifong became just as delusional as Mangum. On March 13, Nifong actually “re-enacted” the rape scene live on cable news, demonstrating on himself how a player choked Mangum—“he had his arm around her like this.” The only problem was that in all of Mangum’s contradictory testimonies, she never once mentioned choking. The story was becoming more incredible with each new telling.

Throughout *Until Proven Innocent*, the players themselves come across as outstanding young men. Certainly, they took part in Duke’s “work hard/play hard” culture—an atmosphere captured by Tom Wolfe in his Duke-inspired *I Am Charlotte Simmons*—but then every graduating senior on the 2006 team had a GPA over 3.0. After an exhaustive investigation, Professor James Coleman

wrote of student athletes who had earned the respect of their female and black colleagues in the athletic department. While campus activists screamed that the players formed a “wall of silence” shielding the guilty, Taylor and Johnson reveal that, before they had proper legal counsel, the players were, if anything, too eager to co-operate with the police: they offered DNA samples, answered questions candidly, volunteered to take lie-detector tests, and even gave the police their passwords to e-mail accounts—this last gesture proved to be a major indiscretion.

While Evans, Finnerty, and Seligmann have been redeemed, Mike Nifong—who’s grown a goatee and issued tearful non-apology apologies in disbarment—has become a metaphor for brazen misconduct. From the beginning, his political motivations were obvious enough: an appointed DA facing a difficult election, Nifong appealed to Durham’s sizeable black population by, in effect, promising to humiliate rich white Dukies on their behalf.

Nifong’s politics were toxic, but as Taylor and Johnson document, race-baiting remains a reliable political weapon—at least in the short term. In the November election, Nifong earned the support of Durham’s black mayor and 95 percent of black voters. With the anti-Nifong vote split, the rogue prosecutor was comfortably re-elected. Durham blacks soon recognized that electing a white demagogue didn’t actually change anything, and Durham’s famously bad town-gown relations have only gotten worse.

Although Taylor and Johnson do not argue as much, Nifong emerges in their account not simply as a Machiavellian thug but as a man caught up in his own idealistic mission. When in an interview he stated that *To Kill a Mockingbird* was his favorite novel, he was clearly casting himself as Durham’s own Atticus Finch. Perhaps he honestly believed he could, in his words, remake “Durham in the minds of the world.”

Duke President Richard Brodhead is also a challenge to interpret. Before

coming to Duke, Brodhead was a respected literary critic and popular dean at Yale. But in the authors’ minds, he was too faint-hearted to confront a serious crisis. In a March 28 meeting with the team captains and their counsel, Brodhead broke down into tears—not because his students were facing decades in prison but because they did not display sympathy for his predicament as university president. With campus protestors raising banners demanding “CASTRATE” and much of the faculty unhinged, Brodhead was passive and accepting, praising the great “dialogue” on campus. It seems that after Larry Summers got a vote of no-confidence from Harvard’s faculty after criticizing black activist professors and questioning PC dogma, Brodhead was in full pander mode.

Brodhead’s moment of truth came on April 7, 2006, when Nifong & Co. made public an e-mail of Ryan McFadden—never a suspect—in which he joked about “killing and skinning” the strippers—a scene cribbed from the book *American Psycho*. The campus went into convulsions. Brodhead reacted immediately, canceling the lacrosse season and forcing Head Coach Mike Pressler to resign—even though he had done nothing wrong. In the authors’ words, “fac[ing] his ultimate test of courage ... Brodhead threw in his lot with the mob.”

As revealed by Taylor and Johnson, Brodhead should have been well aware that his actions were completely unnecessary. In more than one instance, the players’ legal counsel offered the president the opportunity to view exculpatory evidence, but he refused. It is difficult to say why he ran away from the truth. On one level, Brodhead was simply a prude and didn’t want to learn the details. On another, he was just as caught up in the racialized groupthink as everyone else. Although he always stressed “innocent until proven guilty,” he framed his public comments with mention of “the memories of the systematic racial oppression we had hoped to have left behind us.”

While Brodhead proved a weak-willed facilitator, the humanities faculty supplied more than enough ideological fervor—black power activists were joined by literary deconstructionists and unthinking liberals who convinced themselves that attacking white students was inherently progressive. It’s certainly easy to ridicule the inanities seeping out of the humanities departments; “radicals” like Wahneema Lubiano, author of “Shuckin’ Off the African-American Native Other: What’s Po-Mo got to do with it?” would sooner annoy and confuse than inspire a political revolt.

Still, there’s been an appreciable trickling-down. Few outside the academy have read Catherine MacKinnon’s *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* in which she implies that, “under conditions of male dominance,” no distinction exists between intercourse and rape. Yet her assumptions are shockingly widespread. Tara LeVicy, the sexual assault nurse examiner who first treated Mangum and backed up her claims of rape to the police, is a case in point. After learning that no player’s semen was found on Mangum, LeVicy replied, “Rape is about power, not passion,” breathlessly substituting a cheap feminist slogan for evidence.

But this is not the whole story, for in the academic trinity of race, class, and gender, race trumps all. This was decisively proven on Feb 10, 2007, when a white Duke freshman was allegedly raped at an all-black fraternity. The women’s studies department was silent. No candlelight vigils, no protests.

Why so many at an elite university and in a small city acted as they did is not easily explained. While Johnson and Taylor’s concluding chapters detail feminist overkill and the preponderance of false allegations of rape and prosecutorial misconduct, the authors only approach an understanding of the white male guilt of which the fiasco in Durham was a manifestation. This being said, *Until Proven Innocent* is an indispensable history of this most revealing of public scandals. ■

Putin & His Enemies



A Russian man stripped down to the waist last month for the cameras, and his muscled torso made headlines around the world. Mind you, it

was the president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, but few could have predicted the explosion of gossip and speculation that followed the publication of the pictures, taken while Vlad holidayed with Prince Albert of Monaco in the Siberian mountains.

Did it mean Russia was ready to strip herself of her nukes? Duh, no. Russian gay chatrooms and blogs claimed he was pleading for more tolerance for homosexuality in Russia. Not quite. Putin is a black belt in judo and a good skier, hence the macho torso, but as far as anything else is concerned, all the striptease signified was that the president was hot and had taken off his shirt.

Political commentators don't know what to make of Vladimir. He has been using "pipeline diplomacy" to force neighbors such as Belarus and Ukraine to toe the Russian line. He has also intimidated Estonia and Latvia, not to mention Western Europe—as easy to intimidate as a Kuwaiti sheik without Uncle Sam in his corner. Needless to say, the ones screaming the loudest are Western oil companies. These poor dears, basket cases such as BP and Exxon, are being put over the barrel, a position these bullies have been holding John Q. Public in for a very long time. Like all bullies, they are not best pleased when the positions are reversed.

Personally, I'm delighted. The late, great President Nixon once told me that the West was acting unfairly toward the Russian Bear. Instead of helping a prostrate Russia, we cheered while the Russkies suffered defeat and humiliation. Now the chickens have come home

to roost, and Russia is bent upon the recovery of her assets, her authority, and her capacity to intimidate.

Instead of whining, Uncle Sam should put himself in Putin's place. Most of the Russian people love what he's doing. His is the kind of government they understand. top-down policies from the Kremlin have been around for a thousand years. They strike a chord with every taxi driver who still keeps a miniature of Joseph Stalin beside his windscreen.

The indisputable fact is that Russians feel provoked by American plans to deploy part of its new anti-missile system in Eastern Europe. They rejoice in Washington's disaster in Iraq. Putin, they believe, has the Russians walking tall again.

INSTEAD OF **HELPING A PROSTRATE RUSSIA**, WE CHEERED WHILE THE RUSSKIES SUFFERED HUMILIATION. NOW THE CHICKENS HAVE COME HOME TO ROOST, AND RUSSIA IS BENT UPON THE **RECOVERY OF HER ASSETS AND AUTHORITY**.

When communism collapsed, a few smart crooks—now they go by the name oligarchs—grabbed most of the state assets and moved their ill-gotten gains to Britain and Israel, where they laundered their billions by buying football teams, palaces, yachts, and planes. Ninety percent are Jewish, and they charge that Putin has appealed to voters through tacit anti-Semitism. This is a blatantly false accusation, but it plays well among the neocon crowd.

It is true that the richest man in Russia, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a Jew, was summarily imprisoned two years

ago on political grounds. But this had nothing to do with anti-Semitism. Putin wanted to tighten his grip on energy sources, and Khodorkovsky had bought fields in Siberia at bargain prices and controlled Russia's oil exports. After putting him in the pokey, Putin then forced companies like Royal Dutch Shell to sell control of projects to Gazprom. In 1990, the oligarchs controlled Russia's raw materials. No longer, and as I said before, I'm delighted. Russian raw materials belong to Russia, not to foreign multinationals.

The West needs to heed Russia's concerns about strategic balance in the region. But the multinationals have lobbies in Washington that are using rhetoric that went out with the Cold War. A major crook like Boris Berezovsky, exiled in London and currently sheltered by the Brits' refusal to extradite him to Moscow where he's wanted on fraud charges, was recently given a platform in

the *Sunday Times* of London to attack Putin. Berezovsky demanded "an audit of Russian elite's bank accounts"—a bit like Al Capone demanding a tax audit on Eliot Ness.

If Putin could get around the constitution and run again, he would win big time, just as Bin Laden would wipe the floor with those camel drivers posing as princes in Saudi Arabia. I'm betting that he won't even try but will remain a power behind the scenes.

Good for you, Vlad. Keep making the oil companies nervous. They sure deserve it. ■

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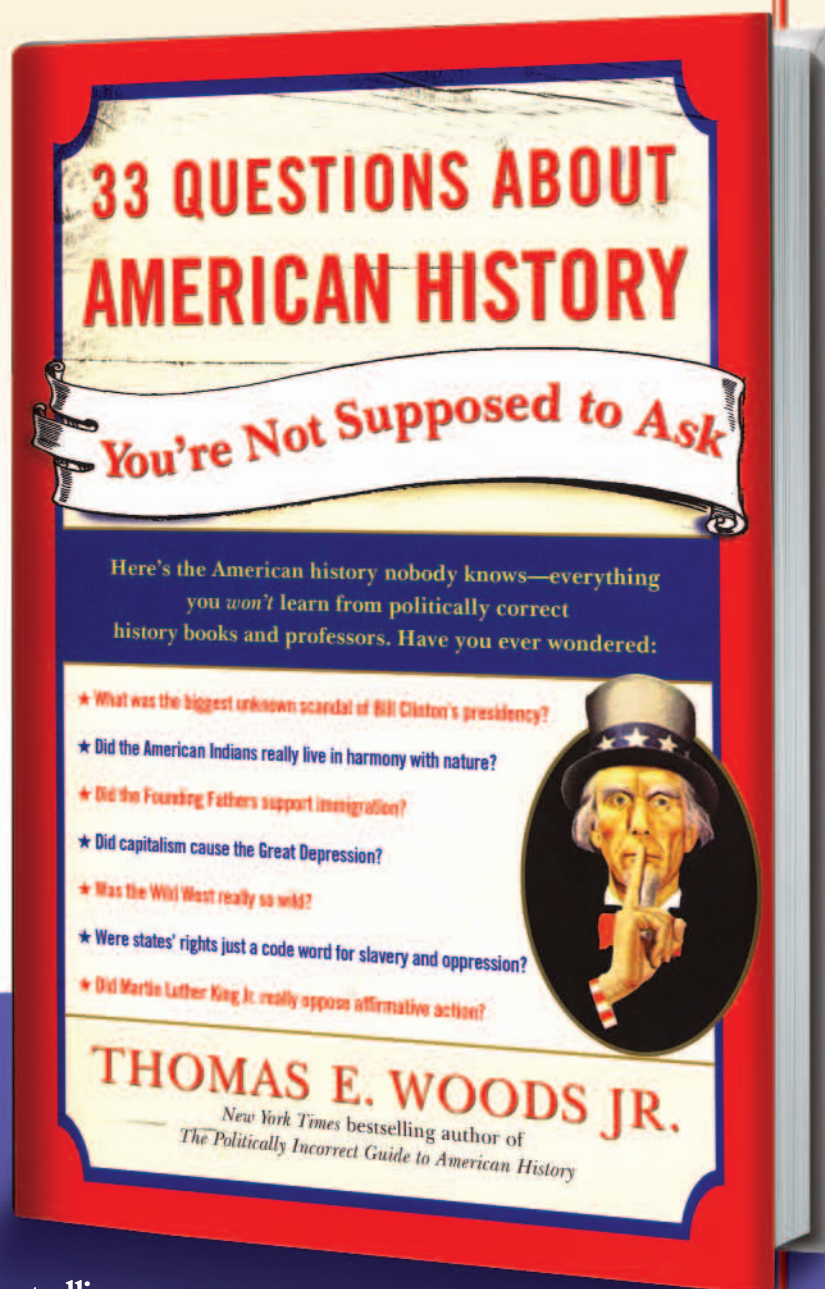
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